

Turkish Islamists fail in car bomb escape bid

ANKARA (R) — A car bomb exploded in central Turkey Friday in an apparent attempt to free eight Islamist suspects being carried to court in a prison vehicle, Anadolu News Agency (ANA) said. It said 10 gendarmes were wounded in the attack in the province of Kars. Other gendarmes sealed off the area and prevented the suspects from escaping, ANA said. "A bomb loaded into a car at the side of the road was set off by remote control...as the armoured prison vehicle was going past," ANA added. The prisoners were being taken to Ankara where they were to appear in a state security court on charges related to the killing of 37 people in an Islamist arson attack in 1997.

Jordan Times

An independent political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
مؤسسة الصحافة الأردنية المستقلة

50% of Israelis are ready for concessions

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Half of all Israelis are prepared to accept certain concessions over Jerusalem with the Palestinians a poll released Friday said. The poll, published by the Israeli daily Maariv, was conducted before the double suicide bombing on Wednesday. According to the survey, 30 per cent of Israelis said they were ready to accept Palestinian sovereignty over parts of Arab east Jerusalem, while another 21 per cent said they were in favour of shared sovereignty in the annexed sector. Out of the remainder, 22 per cent said they were willing to see a Palestinian capital on the outskirts of the city, while only 20 per cent rejected any concession over the Holy City. Seven per cent were undecided. The poll was based on a sample of 504 Jewish Israelis, with an error margin of 4.5 per cent.

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King calls on nation to stand against disunity

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Thursday called on citizens to contribute to building a model country and participate in the decision-making process and in shaping the future.

Addressing a large audience at Al al-Bait University, the King called for protecting our national unity and acting as one team in the face of any attempts to disunite the people.

The King stressed the importance of cooperation and unity in building the country and contributing to its progress. He called on the people to build on the achievements made by the fathers, grandfathers and great grandfathers. The King called for enriching Jordan's march by formulating meaningful programmes based on knowledge, awareness, honesty, patriotism, hard work and dedication.

He said the establishment of Al al-Bait University was designed to serve as an Arab and Islamic university, where researchers can search for the truth.

"We want it to rear the generations on the fear of God

and to defend Islam and our tolerant belief," the King said.

The King also said: "We want the university to prepare well-educated and self-confident generations, capable of living and adapting to a continuously developing world."

Referring to the difficulties facing the university, King Hussein said: "This is a challenge and we have all the resolve and determination to face it. Had this university been established for other objectives and goals, it would not have received support from anywhere and everywhere." The King pledged support for the university to enable it to carry out its pan-Arab and Islamic mission and achieve its objectives. The King noted that the university enjoys the full confidence of the Islamic World, saying that a large number of students from the Islamic World are attending it.

Also addressing the meeting was Mafraq Governor Ahmad Al Lawzi who reviewed the achievements made in the governorate. He said Mafraq Governorate has

seen tremendous developments in all fields, including the agriculture industry, construction, as well as infrastructure services, which altogether contributed to turning it into a centre of attraction for people in the nearby areas.

Al al-Bait University President Mohammad Adnan Al Bakhit presented the university's achievements, plans and programmes. Dr. Bakhit reviewed the work and assignments of the various departments and centres at the university, saying that their programmes are built in accordance with the community's needs. Dr. Bakhit also reviewed the university's contribution to the local community. Dr. Bakhit called for providing a plot of land to build a housing estate for university scholars, and stressed the dire need for providing drinking water.

The meeting was attended by Acting Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour, Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh, the King's advisor for tribal affairs, General Hameidi Al Fayez, Cabinet ministers and deputies from the Mafraq Governorate.

Netanyahu turns screws on Arafat Palestinian police chief says if Israel comes after him to Gaza or elsewhere 'they will not return'

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has turned the screws on Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to crack down on militants in the wake of twin suicide attacks in Jerusalem.

The Israeli leader suspended peace talks, launched a wave of arrests, confined Palestinians to their home districts and threatened to re-enter Palestinian National Authority (PNA)-ruled areas to seize "terrorists" if Mr. Arafat refused.

Mr. Arafat's aides called the moves a "declaration of war" and said they would only crush Palestinian hopes of peace.

In Washington, members of U.S. President Bill Clinton's Middle East advisory team converged on the White House to discuss how to advance tattered Middle East peace efforts.

A senior State Department official who asked not to be identified said a first official Middle East trip for Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was "an option under consideration."

The pair of human bombs who killed 13 people and wounded 170 at a Jerusalem's main Jewish street market Wednesday challenged the Israeli leader with the worst civilian carnage in his 13-month tenure.

Mr. Netanyahu accused Mr. Arafat of having done "damning" to tackle violence and said the international community had an obligation to demand action from the Palestinian president.

"You, Mr. Arafat...you freed murderers. You yourself incited 'jihad, jihad, jihad' [holy struggle] just a few days ago," a fiery-eyed



An Israeli soldier ties a blindfold over the eyes of a Palestinian suspected of belonging to the militant Hamas movement as they arrest Palestinians during the night of Thursday. Behind, in an army truck, another Palestinian is also blindfolded (Reuters photo)

Mr. Netanyahu told Israel's Channel Two television.

"Stop the incitement. Jail the murderers. Find the weapons storehouses and explosives. Act as you are obligated," he said.

By calling off peace talks, Mr. Netanyahu broke ranks with the way the left-leaning Labour Party predecessors he ousted last year dealt with suicide attacks.

They also launched crack-

downs but said halting peace-making would only allow "terrorists" to achieve their goals.

"Instead of fighting terror they decided to fight the Palestinian [National] Authority," Mr. Arafat's aide Nabil Abu said of Mr. Netanyahu's right-wing government.

World leaders urged the sides to press on with talks. Wednesday's attack deep-

Hamas stops short of claiming Jerusalem bombing

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — A leaflet issued Friday by the Islamist Hamas praised suicide bombers who blew up an Israeli market but stopped short of claiming responsibility for the attack. The leaflet, faxed to an international news agency, called the attack "a practical response to the hostile Zionist practices against our people and our nation which has witnessed a noticeable escalation since the terrorist Netanyahu came to office in the Zionist entity." A leaflet issued in the name of Hamas military brigades on the day of the attack had claimed responsibility and given Israel until 9 p.m. Sunday to free all Palestinian prisoners. Israeli and Palestinian officials questioned its authenticity. The new leaflet did not repeat the ultimatum. It said: "The martyrs of Jerusalem attack [was] carried out by two heroes from the Mujahideen [fighters] of our people." It did not say the two bombers belonged to Hamas.

ened a four-month peace crisis sparked in March when Mr. Netanyahu broke ground on a Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem.

"Peace can move forward only if the Palestinian [National] Authority and Yasser Arafat undertake what he hasn't done so far and that is a full court press against the terrorists," Mr. Netanyahu told Reuters in an interview.

"We have every right to take the actions necessary to defend our citizens and we will do so," he said when asked to elaborate on earlier comments by aides that Israeli forces would re-enter PNA areas if Mr. Arafat failed to act.

Israeli and Palestinian security forces arrested suspected Islamist militants in separate raids in the West Bank and Gaza.

In Gaza, Palestinian forces released two senior Hamas political leaders after detaining them for three hours.

Mr. Netanyahu said Israel would arrest Palestinian Police Chief Ghazi Jabali,

accused by Israel of organising attacks on Jewish settlers, if he left PNA territory. Mr. Jabali scoffed.

"Israel can't arrest me. If they come to Gaza or any place else I am, they will not return," Mr. Jabali told reporters. "Do they think that Palestinian people are puppets?"

Officials said Israeli-PNA security meetings took place late Wednesday in the West Bank but they did not elaborate. They said further contacts were expected overnight.

Israeli pathologists were unable to identify the bodies of the two bombers Thursday. Security sources said they were not sure of the authenticity of a leaflet issued in Hamas's name claiming responsibility for the attack.

In the West Bank village of Dahariya, Israeli forces detained members of two Arab families whose two sons, both Islamist militants, went missing 15 months ago.

Forensic experts were checking to see if their DNA matched that of the bombers.

Extremists should not be allowed to impose agenda — Crown Prince

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Thursday stressed the need to overcome all obstacles facing the resumption of the peace process, saying that it is only through comprehensive peace that security can be achieved.

Prince Hassan, who met with the European Union (EU) envoy Miguel Moratinos Thursday said extremist minorities should not be allowed to impose their agenda on the region and to deprive its peoples from establishing peace. The

Crown Prince called for focusing on major and essential issues and giving them priority over temporary or daily events. Prince Hassan and Mr. Moratinos condemned acts of violence which erupt whenever a glimmer of hope for achieving progress in the peace process exists.

Mr. Moratinos emphasised the EU's resolve to make every possible effort to push the peace process forward, noting that violence and counter violence will not contribute to the establishment of comprehensive

peace in the region. He said the EU will continue to support Jordan and to bolster cooperation with this country, as a gesture of appreciation of its important and vital role in building regional peace and stability. The meeting was attended by Foreign Minister Fayez Tarawneh.

Also Thursday, Dr. Tarawneh discussed in a separate meeting with the EU envoy developments of the Middle East peace process and the need to intensify efforts to ensure progress on the Palestinian-Israeli track.

Ross to travel to Mideast after mourning is over

WASHINGTON (AFP) — President Bill Clinton said Friday he will send envoy Dennis Ross to the Mideast with fresh ideas for reviving peace talks once the week-long mourning for victims of this week's Jerusalem bombings ends.

He also indicated that Secretary of State Madeleine Albright might soon make her first trip to the Middle East.

"When the period of mourning is over, I will send Dennis Ross to the Middle East to meet with the leaders there with our latest ideas," Mr. Clinton said.

Mr. Ross postponed a trip this week to the Middle East after two suicide bombers killed 13 people Wednesday in a central Jerusalem market, essentially derailing a new U.S. push to resume stalled negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.

Mr. Clinton declined to set a date for Ms. Albright's mission but stressed that he always intended she should go.

"I have said all along that I will send the Secretary of State to the Middle East at the appropriate time but I want Mr. Ross to go there...to get the reaction of the leaders," he said.

Ms. Albright has not followed up on the intense Mideast shuttle diplomacy of her predecessor, Warren Christopher, sparking charges Mr. Clinton is backing off his commitment to the region.

But a recent agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians to discuss some

long-delayed issues prompted Mr. Ross's thwarted mission Tuesday.

Now the bombing has sent U.S. officials scrambling for a new strategy to restart the peace negotiations, which have been stalled since March over Israel's decision to build settlements in Arab east Jerusalem.

Israel's subsequent security crackdown has outraged the Palestinians and the two sides appear farther apart than ever.

The attack may also jeopardise the U.S. aid package to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), the Middle East Peace Facilitation Act (MEPFA), as the opposition-led U.S. Congress is threatening to reject renewal after the August 12 expiration.

White House spokesman Michael McCurry said the administration is pushing for renewal as the aid package was key to the Mideast peace process but it said it had warned Palestinian President Yasser Arafat the package could be at risk.

"Support of the [Palestinian National] Authority and the transformations taking place is a central element...to strengthening the changes that will support peace in the territories," he said.

Mr. McCurry added, however, that the aid was conditioned on "the capacity of the [Palestinian National] Authority to effectively administer its own affairs...and that includes strong commitments to combat terrorism and to enhance security."



Her Majesty Queen Noor is welcomed by Belgian Queen Fabiola (left) at the Brussels private airport, Friday. The two queens visited the hospitals where the injured of last week's plane crash at Ostende Air Show are being treated (AFP photo)

Queen Noor flies to Belgium to condole air show crash victims

BRUSSELS (AFP) — Her Majesty Queen Noor arrived in Belgium Friday to pay tribute to the nine people killed when a Jordanian light aircraft crashed at an airshow in Ostende last weekend and to visit some of the 55 injured. Accompanied by Queen Fabiola, widow of former Belgian King Baudouin I, Queen Noor visited three people suffering severe burns, who are being treated in Ghent, northwestern Belgium.

Afterwards, the Queen met

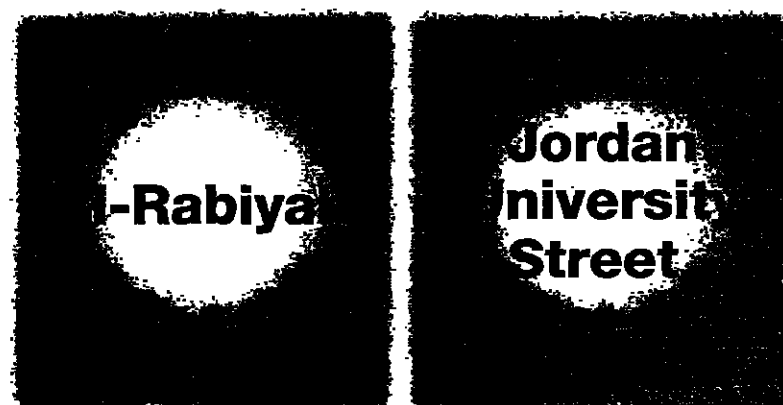
several other people injured in the crash in Bruges and Ostende, both in the north-west of the country. She was later to visit the scene of the accident at the civilian airport in Ostende to place a wreath of flowers in memory of the nine killed. A commission of inquiry investigating the causes of the accident is to deliver a preliminary report by August 15. Amongst other things, it will seek to establish why the Jordanian pilot Omar Hani Bilal, 28, failed to respect the scheduled flight

plan. The German-made XT-300 crashed into the ground last Saturday 100 metres from a public grandstand after failing to recover from a loop, sending fiery debris into the crowd. The pilot and seven spectators were killed instantly. A ninth person died Sunday. Legal sources said a post-mortem had established that the pilot was not suffering from any illness and was not under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of the crash.



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Iranian President-elect Mohammad Khatami (L) welcomes Syrian President Hafez Al Assad, prior to their meeting in Tehran Friday. Mr. Assad accompanied by a military delegation is ending a two-day visit to Iran, his second since Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution (AFP)

Official denies report about clash during talks with Israel

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A Jordanian official source Friday rejected as "completely false" an Israeli newspaper report claiming that Ambassador to Israel Omar Rifai and Israeli Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon exchanged verbal accusations during the talks Jordan and Israel held on water sharing over two months ago.

The report, which appeared in Yediot Ahronot on July 25, quoted unnamed sources as saying that Mr. Rifai and Mr. Sharon had a heated argument while discussing the impasse in the peace process.

The official source said the water talks the two sides held were conducted in a professional manner, noting that they led to an agreement under which Israel started providing Jordan with an extra 50 million cubic metres of water. "These claims are completely baseless. Whoever

made them was obviously trying to create problems between the two countries," the source told the Jordan Times.

Relations between Jordan and Israel, said the source, are governed by the peace treaty the two countries signed in 1994 as well as international norms and are based on mutual respect and non-interference in the internal affairs of each other.

The Yediot Ahronot report was also denied by Sharon's office.

Israel expels woman from south Lebanon

TYRE, Lebanon (AFP) — Israel expelled Friday a 25-year-old Lebanese woman from its occupied zone in south Lebanon after holding her in jail for 45 days, police here said.

Members of the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army (SLA), accompanied by an Israeli officer, arrested Fatima Akhrass at her home in Aitarun, in the occupied zone, last month.

Ms. Akhrass was turned over to the International Committee of the Red Cross after she was released late Thursday from Khiam, Israel's main prison in its self-declared "security zone" in south Lebanon.

Israel has expelled Lebanese from its occupied zone at least five times over the past 10 months, prompting the Lebanese government to file complaints to an international committee monitoring a so-called ceasefire in south Lebanon.

The committee, made up of France, Israel, Lebanon, Syria and the U.S., has asked Paris, through diplomatic contacts with Israel, to obtain authorisation for the Lebanese to return to their homes.

Under an April 1996 ceasefire accord, Israel and Iranian-backed Hizbollah guerrillas agreed not to target civilians on either side of the border in south Lebanon or to launch attacks from civilian areas.

Iran calls on Muslim states to join forces against Israel

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran called Friday for Arab and Muslim countries to line up behind Syria against Israel, during the first visit here in seven years by Syrian President Hafez Al Assad.

Iran's supreme guide, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, appealed for "support for Syria, the only country to stand up courageously to Israel."

Mr. Khamenei, quoted by state radio, also called for a "common line and greater unity between Muslim and Arab countries against the United States and Israel."

He made the remarks in a meeting with the Syrian president, who arrived here Thursday for a 24-hour visit at the head of a military delegation.

The Syrian leader's visit — only his second to Tehran since the 1979 Islamic revolution — coincides with a hardening of positions against Israel and its right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Ayatollah Khamenei urged Gulf Countries to "correct their positions" on the peace process, while acknowledging that Iran's ties with the monarchies could be better.

"We have said that we do not recognise Israel and we do not expect other countries to say the same thing, but to consider Israel's attitude. They must correct their positions on the Middle East," he said.

He said peace in the region was "far from being realised because of the bellicose and hegemonistic nature" of Israel.

"Developing our relations with Syria and supporting this

country are the centrepiece of our diplomacy" in the face of the Israeli threat, Ayatollah Khamenei said.

Mr. Assad, who is scheduled to return to Syria later Friday, praised Tehran's stance on Israel and said "Muslim and Arab countries must be ready to face the plots with which they are threatened."

He later held talks with President-elect Mohammad Khatami, who takes office Monday.

The radio quoted Mr. Khatami as telling the Syrian leader that Iran is committed to the "anti-Israeli struggle," and expressing hope that Iranian-Syrian ties will be strengthened during his term of office.

Mr. Assad met Thursday with outgoing President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who also called for greater Arab and Muslim action against Israel.

"The principle and the strengthening of the force of resistance is the most effective legitimate weapon to destroy the racist illusions of the Zionist regime," Mr. Rafsanjani said at a dinner in Mr. Assad's honour.

Syria is considered Iran's main ally in the Arab World since the Islamic revolution which toppled the shah. Both countries back Shiite Muslim guerrillas fighting Israel's occupation of a border zone in south Lebanon.

Ties were strained by Syria's participation in the U.S.-brokered Middle East peace process, which Iran fiercely opposes, but Syrian-Israeli negotiations talks have been frozen since February 1996.

Israeli ambassador warns Syria against using force

TEL AVIV (R) — An Israeli diplomat, in the latest salvo in a war of words, warned arch-foe Syria Friday that Damascus would "lose everything" if it resorted to using force against Israel.

"They will not achieve anything by force. They can only lose everything," Israel's Ambassador to the U.S. Elihu Ben-Elissar told Israeli Radio in a telephone interview.

On Wednesday, Syrian Army Chief of Staff Major General Hikmat Shihabi said Israel would "pay a heavy price" for aggression against Syria.

Gen. Shihabi said Syria wanted a peace that would return the Golan Heights, occupied by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war.

"When a single inch of our land remains under occupation that means burning coal is still under the ashes and a remaining mine that is liable to explode at any time will still lead in every second to armed struggle," he said.

Syrian President Hafez Al Assad said Tuesday he could see no hope for Middle East peace.

In talks with Mr. Assad in

Tehran, Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani called for a continued struggle against the "Zionist regime," Iran's official news agency IRNA said Friday.

The Iranian president said that the Islamic Republic stressed the need for struggling against the Zionist regime," IRNA said Friday.

Israeli-Syrian peace talks ground to a halt in early 1996. There have been no talks since Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ousted Israel's former dovish government in May 1996 elections.

Mr. Ben-Elissar said that Israel was anxious to resume negotiations with Syria but that Damascus could not place conditions on resuming talks.

Mr. Netanyahu wants to keep all of the strategic plateau, raising Israeli intelligence concern that Syria might use force to retrieve what it has failed to get at the bargaining table.

Tension with Damascus soared last year when Mr. Assad moved thousands of his troops stationed in Lebanon to within striking distance of the Golan.

Heights by force if it could not do so through negotiation. Amid the deadlock in the Middle East peace process and concern over an Israeli-Turkish military pact, Iran has been seeking improved relations with Arab countries.

Iraq denies allegations Uday ordered soccer players beaten

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq denied Thursday allegations President Saddam Hussein's son ordered members of the Iraqi national team beaten after they were eliminated from World Cup qualifying.

"These are no more than fabricated stories aiming at harming the reputation of the president's son," Aseel Tabra of the national Iraqi Olympic Committee said.

The London newspaper The Observer reported that Uday, President Saddam's eldest

son, ordered the soccer players taken to a military camp and beaten on the soles of their feet and their backs after losing to Kazakhstan 3-1 on June 29 in Almaty.

Uday heads both Iraq's soccer federation and its Olympics committee. FIFA announced last week it was investigating the accusation.

Mr. Tabra, who is a deputy to Uday at the Olympic committee, said that the players could not have been beaten

since they appeared only days after the supposed beatings.

The soccer team was part of an Iraqi delegation to the Arab Games that ended Sunday in Lebanon. They left for Lebanon only four days after returning from Kazakhstan.

"How can they go to Lebanon through Syria if they were beaten so bad. Everybody saw them in Syria and on the Lebanese borders training and playing while waiting for the visas," Mr. Tabra said.

Kuwait received only \$17.5 million in compensation

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Kuwait has so far received \$17.5 million in compensation for the Iraqi occupation, the Kuwaiti compensation committee said Friday on the eve of the seventh anniversary of the August 2 invasion.

"The overall amount received so far from the U.N. Compensation Commission is around \$17.5 million," said Mohammad Akasha, who heads the committee's depart-

ment of claims and disbursement.

He told the official Kuwaiti New Agency that Kuwait demanded a total of \$132.3 billion in compensation for the seven-month occupation.

Mr. Akasha said the payments received so far were drawn from the revenue generated by Iraqi oil exports carried out under the U.N. "oil-for-food" scheme which came into effect in December 1996.

The deal allows Baghdad to export crude worth \$2 billion every six months. Two thirds of this amount is allocated for Iraq's food and medical needs, and one third to war reparations and U.N. operations in Iraq.

The Iraqi army torched more than 700 Kuwaiti oil wells before withdrawing from the emirate after a forty-day U.S.-led military offensive.

Sudanese envoy criticises U.S. attacks on Sudan

KHARTOUM (AFP) — A senior Sudanese government official has attacked as unfounded U.S. charges that Sudan backs terrorism and accused Washington of resorting to marginal criticisms instead.

Ali Al Haj Mohammad, minister of federal relations, in a statement carried by the independent Al Rai Al Akher Friday, said the U.S. "has failed to produce evidence [to back] its terrorism charges against Sudan and has therefore resorted to marginal ... accusations."

He cited U.S. criticism of

forced circumcision and linking of parole to learning of the Holy Koran as examples of the "marginal" accusations.

Mr. Mohammad also described as "astonishing" a statement attributed to U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Gary Smith on a recent visit to Sudan in which he reportedly praised Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni as a democrat.

"No one believes that Yoweri Museveni seized power in a democratic manner," the Sudanese official said, branding the Eritrean regime "the most dictatorial regime in the

region."

Mr. Smith left Sudan last week after the highest-level U.S. visit in more than four years, aimed at promoting an end to the war raging in southern Sudan.

His visit to Sudan is judged as significant by the regime here which, on Washington's list of countries that sponsor terrorism, has been deprived of U.S. economic aid since President Omar Al Bashir seized power in 1989.

Washington said earlier this year it planned to isolate Khartoum for backing terrorism and abuses of human rights.

Afghan beheaded in Saudi for drugs

RIYADH (AFP) — An Afghan was beheaded by sword Friday in the western Saudi Arabian city of Jeddah for trying to smuggle heroin into kingdom, the Interior Ministry announced.

"The Afghan Ommar Ali Chir Ali was sentenced to have his neck cut off by the sword; the sentence was carried out in Jeddah," the ministry said in statement run by the official Saudi Press Agency.

"With this announcement, the government of the custodian of the holy mosques," King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, "underlines its commitment to fight drugs and inflict the toughest punishment on smugglers."

Yemen says suspects confessed to Aden blasts

SANAA (AFP) — Suspects arrested in connection with Sunday's dynamite attacks in the southern Yemeni city of Aden have made detailed confessions, the Interior Ministry said in a statement published here Friday.

"The security services have apprehended the saboteurs who carried out the bombings in Aden," said the statement published by the local press.

"They confessed in detail to these terrorist acts whose aim was to shake security, harm the country's reputation and terrorise innocent civilians," it added without disclosing the number or affiliation of those arrested.

"As soon as the investigations are complete, they will be brought to justice so that they receive a deterrent punishment."

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PROGRAMME TWO

14:10 Twinkle
14:30 Wishbone
15:00 Blue Heelers
15:30 World of Geo
16:00 The Valley Between
16:30 Tilt
17:00 French programmes
19:00 Le Journal
19:30 News headlines
19:35 Neighbours
20:00 Comedy — Ties that Bind
20:30 Prism
21:10 Time Trax
22:00 News in English
22:30 Feature film
23:59 Ellen

PRAYER TIMES

04:18 Fajr
05:45 Sunrise/Duha
12:42 Dhuhur
16:22 Asr
19:38 Maghreb
21:06 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swedish, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661656
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366

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Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 652826
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Arman International Church Tel. 5516245
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazarene Tel. 673691
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Moderate summer weather conditions will prevail with temperatures slightly below average and winds northwesterly moderate to active. In Aqaba, it will be hot, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman 17/29
Aqaba 25/36
Deserts 16/33
Jordan Valley 23/36

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Fayed Dabbas 759155
Dr. Adnan Zaghoul 898140
Dr. Fakher Bilbeisi 5522233
Dr. Mazen Al Nhal 830435
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Naironkh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 847632
IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281484
Al Quds pharmacy (—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Zuhair Al Qadi 906606
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381

RJ Flight Information

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HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussain Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 644281/6
Alkileh Maternity, J. Amn 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Munshar Hospital, 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital 09/983323
Zarqa National Hospital 09/900560

Ibn Sina Hospital

Al Hikam Modern Hospital 09/990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital 02/275555
Greek Catholic Hospital 02/272275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital 02/247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital 03/314111
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ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:05 Damascus (RJ)
09:45 New Delhi (RJ)
10:25 Beirut (RJ)
10:50 Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
10:50 Abu Dhabi (RJ)
11:00 Colombo (RJ)

15:00

Barcelona (add) (RJ)
15:55 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:30 London (RJ)
18:10 Istanbul (RJ)
20:30 Cairo (RJ)
23:59 Madrid (add) (RJ)
02:30 Madrid (RJ)
05:30 Bangkok (RJ)

Other Flights

06:10 Jakarta (GA)
07:05 London, Damascus (BA)
13:00 Riyadh (SV)
13:10 Muscat, Abu Dhabi (GF)
15:05 Vienna (OS)
16:30 Dubai (EK)
17:00 Doha (QR)
18:25 Antalya (TK)
20:10 London (GA)
21:10 Paris, Damascus (AF)
22:15 Cairo (MS)
23:25 Beirut (ME)
23:45 Amsterdam (KL)
01:15 London (BA)
03:00 Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW)

(No flights on Saturday)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:45 Beirut (RJ)
12:20 Amsterdam, Chicago, Detroit (RJ)
12:30 Madrid (add) (RJ)
12:45 Istanbul (RJ)
13:00 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
13:00 Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
13:10 Paris (RJ)
13:15 Brussels, Amsterdam (RJ)
14:05 London (RJ)
16:45 Cairo (RJ)
21:10 Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
21:25 Jeddah (RJ)
21:45 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
21:50 Bombay (RJ)
02:00 Abu Dhabi (RJ)

go, Detroit (RJ)

04:00 Rome (AZ)
04:00 Athens (OA)
06:50 Larnaca (CY)
07:10 London (GA)
07:55 London (BA)
08:10 Damascus, London (BA)
14:00 Abu Dhabi, Bahrain (GF)
14:30 Riyadh (SV)
15:50 Vienna (OS)
17:45 Dubai (EK)
17:50 Doha (QR)
19:25 Antalya (TK)
21:10 Jakarta (GA)
23:15 Cairo (MS)
23:55 Damascus, Paris (AF)
00:25 Beirut, Amsterdam (KL)
04:00 Rome (AZ)
04:00 Athens (OA)

Royal Wings (RW)

(No flights on Saturday)

JERASH FESTIVAL

Starring "Sleeping Beauty" by Rina Campy at the Jerash Theatre at 8:30 p.m.

Early Spanish Lit. & Romance Band 7:30 p.m.

Live performance by Ramallah Band 7:30 p.m.

Specials by Palestinian, Lebanese & Jordanian Bands at 8:00 p.m.

Live performance by Karagounides and Jordanian bands, as well as a collection of handicrafts and sculptures at 2:00 p.m.

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HRH Crown Prince Hassan Friday greets Jordanian soldiers who have just completed a peace-keeping mission in Slovenia. Prince Hassan praised the role played by the Jordan Armed Forces in the peace-keeping operations, as well as in maintaining international security and relieving principles and ideals which respect human dignity and rights. Prince Hassan was received by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mirai Kasabeh and senior Armed Forces officers. Prince Hassan was accompanied by HRH Prince Rashed Ben Al Hassan (Petra Photo)

Crown Prince congratulates returning athletes

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordanian athletes were lauded for their impressive achievements in the recent Pan-Arab Games, while sports officials were called upon to strive even further, when HRH Crown Prince Hassan hosted a lunch in their honour Thursday.

The Kingdom's athletes won a total of 39 medals in Beirut, including more gold medals than in the past seven Pan-Arab Games combined.

Addressing the delegation members, Prince Hassan praised the athletes who bested previous records at the games during which the soccer team was awarded a gold medal for its win of the final soccer match.

The Crown Prince urged sports officials to conceive of their teams' future plans as a national endeavour.

Prince Hassan emphasised HRH Prince Abdullah Ben Al Hussein's moral support and untiring efforts to advance Jordanian sports.

The Crown Prince also urged the adoption of an integrated plan which would allocate JD 25 million to support sports and youth up to the year 2000.

However, the Prince deplored the injuries and deaths resulting from "festive firing" by those celebrating Jordan's soccer win as well as recent tawjili results.



HRH Crown Prince Hassan congratulates Jordanian athletes on their recent achievements in the last Pan-Arab Games. The Kingdom's athletes won a total of 39 medals in Beirut, including more gold medals than in the past seven Pan-Arab Games combined (Petra photo)

Cherishing and celebrating such successes should be done in sportsmanlike manner rather than by firing in the air and causing harm," he said.

Jordan finished fifth overall among 19 competing countries in the best Jordanian showing since the Pan-Arab Games were launched in 1953.

The Kingdom brought home 10 gold, 8 silver and 21 bronze medals in the two-week event, with Jordanian athletes competing in 14 of the 20 events.

Referring to the next Pan-Arab Games which Amman will be hosting in the year 2001, Prince Hassan affirmed: "It was not easy to obtain the honour of organising the games in Jordan. It will not be an easy task and I entrust you with the preparations."

The meeting was attended by Their Royal Highnesses Prince Abdullah, Prince Rashed Ben Al Hassan, Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid and Minister of Culture and Youth Qasem Abu Ein.

To mark Jordan's sports achievements, the Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications has decided to issue commemorative stamps.

'Malaysia to employ 3,000 Jordanians'

KUALA LUMPUR (Petra)

— Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Friday announced that the Malaysian government intends to employ 3,000 Jordanians to work here.

Following a meeting with Malaysian Premier Mahathir Mohammad, Dr. Majali said the Kuala Lumpur government will consider recruiting others in the coming years.

On other matters of cooperation, such as water, health, investment and education, Dr. Majali described the two countries as agreeing to activate bilateral agreements signed in 1994.

The Malaysian government will launch a project in Aqaba and build dams in the southern parts of the Kingdom," Dr. Majali said.

The premier toured several Malaysian projects, accompanied by Minister of Health and Medical Care Ashraf Kurdi, Minister of Finance Suleiman Hafez and Jordan's Ambassador to Malaysia Luay Khashman.

Dr. Majali Wednesday stated in a conference at Langkawi that Jordan is seeking cooperation and coordination with all countries on "Smart Partnership."

The prime minister stressed Jordan's support for a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East region, and pointed to Israel's intransigence as causing an impasse in the peace talks.

Peace cannot be reached

without full recognition of Palestinian rights on their national soil as well as their right to self-determination, he said.

Dr. Majali called for the immediate resumption of peace talks on all tracks, including the Lebanese-Israeli and Syrian-Israeli tracks, so that peace and stability can be a reality in the entire region and its people can prosper.

'Kingdom supports universal land mine treaty'

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Brussels International Conference for a Global Ban on Anti-Personnel Land Mines, held from June 24 to 27, has been described as a positive step by both international and local observers.

Jordan was among 97 countries to adopt a declaration, targeted towards an anti-personnel land mine ban treaty, to be signed by the end of this year.

"In associating themselves with the Brussels Declaration, states affirm that the essential elements of the treaty should include a comprehensive ban on the use, stockpiling, production, and transfer of anti-personnel land mines; the destruction of stockpiled and removed anti-personnel land mines, and international cooperation and assistance in the field of mine clearance in affected countries," says Mu'in Qassis, assistant head of the International Committee of the Red Cross Delegation in Jordan (ICRC).

The ICRC, the United Nations and 100 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from 40 countries form part of the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines (ICBL).

These organisations and 155 other states attended the Brussels Conference.

The aim of the meeting was to review measures taken towards the prohibition of anti-personnel land mines and to agree on necessary action for the realisation of a treaty banning these weapons before the end of 1997.

This conference stems from the Ottawa Conference held in Canada in October last year.

The Ottawa process, attended by 53 states including Jordan, set forth a mechanism for the ban of anti-personnel land mines.

Israel, Syria and Egypt were not party to the process.

Next month, at a diplomatic conference to take place in Oslo, discussions will be underway regarding the wording of the new international humanitarian law treaty.

Only the signatory countries to the Brussels Declaration will attend this meeting. The actual treaty is expected to be signed by the first week of December in Ottawa.

The treaty commits countries to

long-term programmes to meet the needs of mine victims and to clear existing mines.

"We are talking about clear commitments to abide by a treaty calling for a total ban on the production, stockpiling, exporting and transferring of anti-personnel land mines," Mr. Qassis stressed.

At the Brussels Conference, the President of the ICRC Cornelio Sommaruga urged states to commit themselves not only to a ban of anti-personnel mines, but also to long-term programmes to meet the needs of mine victims as well as clear existing mines.

An integrated approach to victim assistance was a point of focus at one of the conference's round tables. The first two days dealt with issues relating to the treaty, while the next two were dedicated to four round tables discussing anti-personnel mine problems.

According to the ICRC database on mine incidents, over 9,000 victims of explosions have been recorded in more than 40 countries since 1995.

A comprehensive programme for the assistance and support of land mine victims and for countries willing to initiate mine-clearing operations is part of the commitment stipulated within the treaty.

Observers believe that Jordan will be the first Arab country to sign this treaty.

Others however, have demonstrated certain reservations. "In principle, Jordan supports all humanitarian efforts aimed at achieving a total ban on anti-personnel land mines," states Vice President for Military Affairs at Mu'tah University Dr. Ma'rouf Bakhit. "That is why Jordan adopted the declaration... [the Kingdom] is open to international cooperation, but we have to wait and see." He told the Jordan Times that, provided the treaty becomes universal, Jordan encourages its adoption.

Dr. Bakhit explained that Jordan is in the process of assessing all initiatives in this domain.

He stated that the Kingdom must first study all aspects of the situation with priority given to humanitarian concerns.

"The treaty must be balanced, with national security interests paying particular attention to neighbouring countries" according to Dr. Bakhit.

Dr. Chris Giannou from the ICRC

Health Operations Division states that there are three patterns by which people become victims of land mine incidents.

Legs, feet, genitalia and arms are often the first casualties when people step on blast land mines. Any part of the body is susceptible for victims who survive explosions of fragmentation mines, the second type of incident. Children and deminers are the victims of the third pattern. This pattern of injury occurs when children mistake a mine for a toy and detonate it, or when deminers accidentally set off a mine.

This results in severe casualties to the hands and face of the victim.

It costs an estimated \$300 to sweep one land mine. Specialists in the field of land mines believe that there are still around 280,000 land mines buried in Jordan as a consequence of previous wars.

For this reason, the Kingdom has taken measures to rid its border areas of land mines.

"Jordan receives technical and financial assistance from countries such as Germany and the United States to demine these devices," Dr. Bakhit explained. "Jordan even relies on its own meagre resources in efforts to sweep land mines."

Regardless of expenses to the country, Jordan is invested in the well-being of its farmers, and particularly citizens residing near the borders, according to Dr. Bakhit.

Syria, Iran, Kuwait, Iraq, Egypt are also impacted by land mines, and in the Western Sahara, millions of land mines remain from World War Two, according to an ICRC assistant official.

According to a Human Rights Watch Arms Project document, Jordan is among 37 countries which have announced that they do not currently export anti-personnel land mines and do not intend to do so in the future.

Among the nations suspected of presently exporting antipersonnel mines are Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Bosnia, Serbia and Vietnam.

These nations have exported anti-personnel mines in the past, and have not yet declared a ban nor moratorium.

Nations still producing land mines include Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Argentina and Japan.

WHAT'S GOING ON

JERASH FESTIVAL

* Ballet entitled "Sleeping Beauty" by Russian Omsk Ballet Company at the North Theatre at 8:30 p.m.

* Concert by Spanish Dos Hermanas Band at the South Theatre at 8:30 p.m.

* Concert by the Hybrid Arab Music Band at Artemis Steps at 8:30 p.m.

* Musical performance by Ramallah Band of Palestine at 8:30 p.m.

* Poetry recitals by Palestinian, Lebanese and Jordanian poets at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabel Amman at 8:45 p.m.

* Play entitled "Salamistan" at Gracia Theatre at 8:00 p.m. (to be followed by oud performance by Ghassan Abouel at 9:30 p.m.)

* Musical performance by Karagounides Group of Greece and Jordanian bands, as well as a circus at the main square at 7:00 p.m.

* Display of handicrafts and sculptures at Zeus vault.

LECTURE

* "The Jordanian Foreign Policy With Its Arab and Islamic Dimensions" by Dr. Fawzi Al Rifai at the Jordanian Cultural Center at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* "The Jordanian Cultural Center" by Jan Karsay at the French Cultural Center, Jabel Amman, until Aug. 4.

Conditions outlined for volunteer work

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Social Development Mohammad Mamser Friday stressed the importance of social voluntary work and announced conditions for recruiting volunteers therein.

Dr. Mamser announced the inception of a project to recruit social work volunteers in the Kingdom to a committee responsible for same.

He also set conditions for young men and women who have expressed interest in this work.

Dr. Mamser described political, social and economic developments over the past decades as creating social imbalances in the nation.

This has resulted in an increase in social problems, juvenile delinquency, crimes, disability, broken families, poverty and unemployment, he said.

"The situation has prompted the creation of charitable and voluntary societies in Jordan whose number has now risen to almost 700," according to Dr. Mamser.

He emphasised the ministry's determination that persons volunteer for social work as a contribution to the nation. "Voluntary work enhances the spirit of national belonging and participation in the execution of programmes designed to help local communities," he added.

Citizens wishing to work for the ministry must abide by the ministry rules and regulations, remain committed to their voluntary service, undergo training for social work and accept whichever service is assigned by the ministry, the minister explained.

He stated that the ministry would take the volunteers' capabilities and interests into consideration before assigning a certain person to a specific area.

"Those volunteers engaged by the ministry must not demand permanent work for monthly wages nor expect any financial remuneration for their work nor compensation for any injury sustained in the course of their voluntary duty," the minister said.

Volunteers will be given assigned work in primary health care, cultural and artistic fields and social and sports arenas among other jobs, he enumerated.

Dr. Mamser also discussed a national conference on social work to be convened soon.

Ministry Secretary General Farouq Naghwai and other senior officials attended the meeting.

Deputy emphasises citizen role

DEIR ABU SAEED

(Petra) — Former Deputy Prime Minister Deputy Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh Friday emphasised the role of citizens in fighting economic stagnation, poverty and unemployment.

In a lecture delivered at the Jenin Al Safa municipality, Mr. Rawabdeh described national unity as one of basic pillars in solving the above mentioned problems.

"We should unite ranks and face these issues," he said. "Jordanians should be involved in the decision-making process and exercise their right to [vote]."

"We should express our opinions and views in a proper and peaceful manner," Mr. Rawabdeh affirmed.

He described the merging of some political parties into the National Constitutional Party as an attempt to better consolidate party efforts and endeavours to serve the nation and its citizens.

NEWS IN BRIEF

King congratulates Benin

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Friday sent a cable of congratulations to president of Benin on behalf of the Jordanian people and government on Benin's national day. The King wished the president and people of Benin further progress and prosperity. The King also sent a cable to Swiss President Arnold Koller congratulating him and the Swiss people on their national day.

Pakistanis to visit Kingdom

AMMAN (Petra) — A Pakistani delegation will arrive here Aug. 10 on a two-day official visit during which it will meet with senior Jordanian officials and businesspersons. The delegation, led by Senator and President of the Pakistani Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Elias Ahmad Beillor will hold talks with Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf and other senior Jordanian economists.

Bahraini concludes visit

AMMAN (J.T.) — Bahraini Public Security Director General Duetj Ben Khalifeh Al Khalifeh Friday concluded a four-day visit to Jordan during which he met with Public Security Department (PSD) Director Lieutenant General Nasouh Muheiddin and other senior PSD officers. Mr.

Khalifeh was briefed on Jordan's expertise in public security and signed an agreement of cooperation on police issues. Lt. Gen. Muheiddin described Jordan as ready to extend assistance to the Bahraini public security forces.

Lawzi emphasises codes

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Public Works and Housing Nasser Lawzi Friday presided over a ministry meeting and stressed the importance of strict compliance with the country's building codes. Mr. Lawzi also emphasised the need to abide by the rules and regulations of the ministry in giving allowances and promotions. The minister and other senior officials were briefed by the ministry's director of the Department of Road Maintenance on systems followed to ensure the regular maintenance of the Kingdom's roads and to finish projects on time.

Training to begin in Petra

PETRA (Petra) — A training course for 50 tourist guides is to commence Saturday in Petra. The course, organised by the Petra Regional Council, in cooperation with the University of Jordan, aims to develop the skills of Jordanian tourist guides and provide them with tourism-related data. University specialists will lecture on the history of Jordan, Petra and other sites of importance in the Kingdom.

Cambodian sources confirm heavy fighting near Thai border

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Cambodian sources Friday confirmed heavy fighting had erupted in the north of the country between government forces loyal to strongman Hun Sen and rival troops, sending refugees fleeing to Thailand.

The outbreak of hostilities in the remote and politically and militarily complex area is among the fiercest since First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh was ousted from power by Mr. Hun Sen three weeks ago.

"There has been heavy fighting since Thursday night about 25 kilometres north of Poipet," a Western military analyst said. "It seems there are a lot of people crossing the border into Thailand or waiting to get across to escape the fighting, but their numbers are unclear," he added.

He and other sources here said heavy artillery, rockets and mortars were being used in the battle, which appeared to be between government troops and those loyal to a former top commander in the area, Lay Virak.

But the sources could not confirm that Gen. Lay Virak, who commands a powerful unit of troops and has great influence in the region, had allied himself with FUNCINPEC party troops loyal to Prince Ranariddh.

"It's too early to say that, it's not impossible, but it looks like most of the 12th military division formerly under Gen. Lay Virak's command are staying neutral and waiting to see which way things go," one said.

"What seems relatively sure," another analyst said, "is that government troops are clashing with remnants of the 12th division under Lay Virak's command, but its unclear whether this is politically or economically motivated."

Another source in the region, however, said he believed Gen. Lay Virak had in fact joined up with Prince Ranariddh's controversial former deputy chief of staff, Nhiek Bun Chhay, who is in the area.

Whatever the nature of the battle, Gen. Lay Virak was not in the area himself, sources told AFP.

Cambodia's military system — the army, militias and the opposition — is based on a network of warlords to whom troops owe absolute allegiance, experts say. Government and official military sources could not be reached for comment here Friday.

Mr. Hun Sen's troops have consolidated the second premier's bloody takeover in Phnom Penh on July 5 and 6, advancing against royalist forces in northern Cambodia and seizing large areas from apparently demoralised and out-gunned FUNCINPEC forces.

Meanwhile in a related development, Cambodia warned its southeast Asian neighbours not to meddle in its affairs Friday as three ASEAN foreign ministers prepared to launch a new mediation initiative for the Cambodia crisis.

The ministers from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) were to meet in Phnom Penh Saturday with Cambodia's strong arm leader Hun Sen and Foreign Minister Ung Huot.

"The role of ASEAN that we have welcomed is to find the solutions for peace and stability in Cambodia," the foreign minister told reporters.

"We invited them to come, (but) no one country in the world wants another to interfere in its internal affairs."

He added: "We are not different."

Alarm bells rang across southeast Asia when Second Prime Minister Hun Sen ousted First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh after two days of clashes in Phnom Penh early last month. ASEAN suspended Cambodia's planned membership.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas and his counterparts from the Philippines and Thailand, Domingo Siazon and Prachub Chaiyasam were rebuffed by Mr. Hun Sen on a first mission two weeks ago.

Mr. Hun Sen said Cambodia could solve its own problems.

But the regional grouping relaunched its mediation drive after Mr. Ung Huot last week sent an apparently conciliatory letter to the ministers.

Mr. Ung Huot said he was looking forward to talks on issues that did not fall into the realm of internal affairs. "If its a matter for allowing peace and stability here, then we can accept it," he said.

The foreign minister, who has been picked by a faction of Prince Ranariddh's FUNCINPEC party to replace him, would not reveal what issues would be raised.

"We will wait and see what topics they will bring to discuss with us tomorrow," he said. The ministers are expected to arrive on two special flights early Saturday.

Diplomats and Foreign Ministry officials declined to say what would be discussed by the envoys and Mr. Hun Sen. Mr. Ung Huot and top government officials.

"We want to see something positive come out of these talks," a senior ASEAN diplomat said. "They have now told us we have a role, so we are here to mediate and need to listen to Hun Sen to find out exactly what his stance is."

By-election voters fire warning shot at U.K. Labour

LONDON (R) — Britain's Labour Party was licking its wounds Friday after losing to the conservative opposition in the first test of voter opinion since Labour swept to power in the May 1 general elections.

Conservative candidate, John Randall secured a five per cent swing away from Labour to retain the seat of Uxbridge, west London, in a parliamentary by-election. Mr. Randall's majority of 3,766 was almost five times the 724-vote margin secured by Sir Michael Shersby in May. The by-election was prompted by Sir Shersby's death.

Conservative Party Chairman Lord Cecil Parkinson hailed the result as a triumph for William Hague, who replaced ex-Prime Minister John Major as party leader after Labour's landslide general election victory ended 18 years of Conservative rule.

Mr. Hague was due to attend a party celebration in

Uxbridge later Friday — at a bar called "the turning point."

"He will be pleased. I think he has a right to be," Mr. Parkinson told BBC radio.

"If we had lost, people would have said this is really the beginning of the end... There are a substantial number of Conservatives who didn't vote for us at the general election for one reason or another who are beginning to come back to us."

Mr. Randall, a local furniture shop owner, was the first Conservative to win a by-election since 1989, when, ironically, Mr. Hague himself entered parliament by winning a contest at Richmond, northern England.

Mr. Randall won 16,288 votes to 12,522 for Labour candidate, Andy Slaughter, with other candidates also.

Labour put a brave face on the defeat. Deputy Prime

Minister John Prescott said Uxbridge was a traditional Conservative seat and it would have been a shock if Labour had captured it.

"A safe Tory seat has remained Tory," he said.

The Conservative victory came despite evidence that support for the party nationally is at a low ebb. A Mori opinion poll Thursday gave Labour 57 per cent support to the Conservatives' 23 per cent.

Labour officials had recognised that the choice of Mr. Slaughter, leader of an inner London local council, as the candidate in Uxbridge was unpopular locally.

Mr. Slaughter was preferred to Dave Williams, the party's general election candidate, who is a local man.

The result will make no difference in the House of Commons, which broke up on Thursday for a three-month holiday. Labour retains a commanding majority of 178 in the 659-seat

lower chamber, allowing it to do more or less as it pleases.

But Conservatives are determined to press home attacks on Prime Minister Tony Blair's appointment of businessman Lord David Simon as minister for trade and competitiveness in Europe.

They are querying why Lord Simon, formerly chairman of British Petroleum PLC, did not sell shares worth £2 million in the company when he took up the post, and asking how he answers charges of a potential conflict of interest.

Lord Simon hit back Friday at "some of the arguments employed by what was once the party of business."

"Both the spirit and letter of the rules (on ministerial conduct) have been followed in every way," he wrote in an article in The Times newspaper.

China says army should be smaller, tougher

BEIJING (R) — China Friday marked the 70th anniversary of the founding of its People's Liberation Army (PLA) with praise, peace pledges and calls for the world's largest military to be turned into a smaller, tougher fighting machine.

State leaders and official media joined in a chorus of congratulatory for the three-million strong PLA, hailing its military power and political loyalty but hastening to reassure China's neighbours that its role was purely defensive.

China would use its growing economic strength, to boost defence spending, but the army would have to shrink in size to grow in stature, state media quoted President Jiang Zemin as telling a gathering of military officials in Beijing.

"Streamlining the army with Chinese characteristics is the right choice for China in military modernisation," Mr. Jiang said.

"To walk the road of crack troops with Chinese characteristics requires the streng-

thening of quality and modernising construction," the official People's Daily said.

"We must certainly... as quickly as possible make the shift from quantity to quality and from manpower to science and technology," it said in an editorial.

Beijing has been eager to play up the achievements of the PLA in its seven-decade march from peasant force to modern military, but some of the public praise has been touched with hints of dissatisfaction at the army's recent performance.

"Management of the army should be improved so that the army will be better disciplined," the Xinhua news agency quoted Mr. Jiang as saying.

Mr. Jiang, a former engineer with no military background, this month moved to assert his authority over China's politically powerful generals by issuing an internal directive slamming crime and corruption in the army's ranks.

Analysts said the directive could be the start of a push

to remove 81-year-old General Liu Huaqing from his position as China's top officer, and so buttress Mr. Jiang's clout in the PLA.

Pledges of undying loyalty to Mr. Jiang and the ruling Communist Party from top officers have filled newspapers and television news reports in recent days, but analysts say the military remains a key player in Chinese politics.

"We must never lose our loyalty to the party, to the motherland, to the people and to socialism," Defence Minister Chi Haotian said.

Such fealty was essential to keeping China's guns in the hands of Communist Party loyalists, the People's Daily said.

"Commanders throughout the army must be increasingly educated to realise and support the absolute leadership of the party and to resolutely oppose the infiltration of 'de-partyisation' and 'de-politicisation' thinking by hostile Western forces," it said.

China's campaign to modernise its armed forces by

deploying long-range missiles, advanced fighters and new warships has sent shivers through regional neighbours — many of which have lingering territorial differences with Beijing.

The China Daily moved to dampen such concerns by saying non-aggression was a core PLA concept.

"Nothing in the past decades has changed its essential role as a force of national defence," the newspaper said.

Defence Minister Chi said such passivity did not extend to military policy on Beijing's arch-rival, Taiwan.

Beijing has threatened to invade the island, which it has considered a rebel province since the end of the Chinese civil war in 1949, if Taipei ever declares formal independence.

"We will never commit ourselves to forsaking the use of force," Mr. Chi said. "This is to preempt the forces in Taiwan seeking Taiwan independence and splitting the motherland."

China forces monks to denounce Dalai Lama — monitors

BEIJING (R) — China is forcing monks and nuns in its deeply religious Tibet region to denounce their spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama as a serpent's head, in a campaign to wipe out his influence, a Tibet monitoring group said Friday.

Political education teams had entered monasteries and temples throughout Tibet to hammer into monks and nuns

Beijing's view of the Dalai Lama as a separatist and a threat to Buddhism, the London-based Tibet Information Network (TIN) said in a statement.

"Reduction teams are carrying out three-month residencies in all Tibetan monasteries as part of a programme which began in May last year to instruct monks and nuns in patriotism," it

said.

After the three months of political classes, officials would give Tibet's Buddhist clergy a test quizzing them on the four aspects of the Dalai Lama as defined by Li Ruihuan, the top official in charge of religious affairs, it said, quoting from a copy of the examination.

"The correct answer... is that the Dalai is 'the head of

the serpent and the chieftain of the separatist organisation conspiring for independence for Tibet... (and) the root cause of social instability in Tibet," it said.

Mr. Li, a standing committee member of China's politburo, had also slammed Tibet's exiled god-king as a tool of foreign forces opposed to China, it said.



An aerial photo shows the weak part of the Oder dike near Hohenwutzen where hundreds of soldiers and volunteers are fighting against the breaking of the dike for the past three days (Reuters photo)

New tears in Oder dikes on German border raise the chance of flooding

HOHENWUTZEN (R) — New tears appeared in flood barriers holding back the river Oder on Germany's eastern border Friday and water levels remained high, raising the prospect of a total breach, officials said.

Around 15,000 people have been evacuated from the region since last week and thousands more warned to be ready to leave their homes at a moment's notice.

The most immediate threat remained in the village of Hohenwutzen, where soldiers have battled around the clock for over a week to support a section of the barrier weakened by heavy floods.

"The chances that the dike will break are more probable than that we will be able to hold it," said a spokesman from the Flood Crisis Committee in nearby Bad Freienwalde.

While soldiers and aid workers toiled through the night to secure weak points in the dam near Hohenwutzen, new tears appeared in the dam near Reitwein, the site of a dam break in 1947 that resulted in massive flooding of the region.

"We were working all night, but the situation remains critical," an army

press spokesman told ARD Television.

Brandenburg state officials said the situation in Reitwein was under control but expressed concern the damage there could become as critical as in Hohenwutzen unless water levels soon fell by at least 1.5 metres.

Should the dikes break, an area 17 kilometres wide and 50 kilometres long on Germany's border with Poland would be flooded, submerging dozens of villages, farms and factories.

Poland and the Czech Republic have been hit hard by Europe's worst floods in over a century, which have claimed over 100 lives. Tens of thousands of people are still homeless.

There have been no flood-related deaths in Germany, but there has been extensive damage to homes, businesses, factories and local infrastructure.

Several towns are completely under water near Frankfurt An Der Oder, around 70 kilometres from Berlin. The Bonn government and the state of Brandenburg have agreed a 40 million-mark (\$22 million) emergency aid fund to provide immediate assistance to flood victims.

European Commissioner Monika Wulf-Mathies, responsible for regional aid projects, was scheduled to pay a visit later in the day to Hohenwutzen.

Germany and Poland are discussing the possibility of seeking European Union aid for a joint project to modernise dikes and other infrastructure along the Oder, which forms part of their border.

If approved, the project could transform the flood catastrophe into a programme to boost jobs in a region with above average unemployment.

"We are now assessing the damages with the help of the German and Dutch governments," Alain Pilloux of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development told CNN Television.

"In the end I think there will be enough money to mitigate the effects of the floods."

The Polish government estimates damage from the floods could be as high as \$1.4 billion, and German officials have put the cost to their country at around one billion marks (\$540 million). In the Czech Republic, economists have said damage could be as high as \$2.6 billion.

France to shut key base in C. Africa

BANGUI (R) — France is to close down a key military base in the north of the Central African Republic and to wind down a second in the capital, Central African Television reported Thursday.

The state television said the closure of the Bouar Base was announced by French Defence Minister Alain Richard during a meeting with President Ange-Felix Patasse in Bangui.

"For budgetary and professional reasons, the French government has decided to reduce its garrisons in Africa and notably to close the Bouar military base," Mr. Richard said.

"As for the base situated in Bangui, a progressive withdrawal of personnel is planned," Mr. Richard said without giving a time frame for either move. The two bases have a total of about 1,200 troops backed by warplanes.

The television said Mr. Richard gave an assurance that France would "listen attentively" to any pleas for help from Mr. Patasse, who was protected by French troops during a series of revolts by his army in the past year.

France would also maintain material and

logistical support for an African force that has taken over policing of the capital from French troops following accords last February ending the latest army mutiny.

Mr. Richard was wrapping up visits to Gabon, Chad and the Central African Republic, where France has troops under accords with its former African colonies dating back to the 1960s.

The new socialist government in Paris has announced its intention to reduce France's military presence in Africa.

Mr. Richard embarked on the tour to explain the new French policy, which has provoked fears in conservative French circles of opening the door to wider U.S. influence in Africa.

Apart from other considerations, the cuts underline a belief that Africa needs less policing after the end of the cold war.

New Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin's government plans to cut the number of French troops in Africa by about 40 per cent to 5,000 from 8,350, French government sources said.

But Mr. Richard said at his earlier stops that France would leave

800-strong garrison in the Chad capital N'djamena untouched and would upgrade facilities at its base in Gabon.

The N'djamena base was bolstered when French troops backed Chad during its conflict with Libya in the 1980s.

Bases in Central African Republic have played a frontline role in France's numerous interventions in its former African colonies.

France also has much larger bases, including naval units, in Djibouti at the mouth of the Red Sea and in the Indian Ocean.

The cutbacks come at a time Paris has suffered a string of setbacks in Africa, culminating in the overthrow of long-term ally President Mobutu Sese Seko this year in what was Zaire by Laurent Kabila's forces.

Before a left-wing victory in France's June 1 election, Mr. Jospin said the former government's support for Mr. Mobutu sealed "the bankruptcy of France's Africa policy" under conservative President Jacques Chirac.

Belarus warns Russia over visit snub to leader

MOSCOW (R) —

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko suggested Kremlin liberals were behind it.

The move marked a new chill in once warm relations between the former Soviet states following the arrest last weekend.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Mr. Lukashenko have exchanged harsh words. Mr. Yeltsin threatened to review the union treaty the two signed in May if the three journalists from Russian state-controlled ORT television were not freed.

Two of them face up to five years in jail after being charged with illegally crossing the Belarus-Lithuanian border.

International human rights groups have also urged their release and have criticised limits on press freedom in Belarus.

In Minsk Thursday, 14 journalists who were taking part in and reporting on the handing in of a petition in support of the ORT crew were briefly detained.

TASS, Interfax and RIA news agencies quoted Mr. Lukashenko's spokesman in Minsk saying Friday's trip to the Baltic enclave of Kaliningrad was cancelled

"due to an attempt by the Russians to link this visit to the ORT journalists' affair."

The spokesman said "pressure" from Moscow ran counter to international law and to the Russia-Belarus union treaty. Such attempts "seriously hinder the development of relations between Belarus and Russia as a whole and Kaliningrad region in particular," Interfax quoted the spokesman as saying.

Kaliningrad, sandwiched between Poland, Lithuania and the Baltic, is also cut off from the rest of Russia by Belarus.

TASS, reporting from Kaliningrad, said Governor Leonid Gorbunov had sent a telegram overnight asking Mr. Lukashenko to come at a later date because of "concerns" relating to the "situation surrounding the arrest of the ORT journalists."

"It's obvious these actions were not undertaken without participation by the opponents of Belarus-Russian integration in Moscow," TASS quoted Mr. Lukashenko's press service as saying.

Mr. Lukashenko Thursday accused liberal First Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Chubais of trying to torpedo integration.

Liberals led by Mr. Chubais persuaded Mr. Yeltsin to water down the Belarus union treaty earlier this year. Kremlin sources said they feared the lack of market reforms in Belarus could hold Russia back and weaken Lukashenko's political platform in Russia.

Mr. Yeltsin said Wednesday he was "surprised and indignant" at the arrests and suggested Moscow might revise the union.

Mr. Yeltsin's press secretary sought to calm the waters by saying Mr. Yeltsin did not want the incident to mar overall ties. But he added that Mr. Yeltsin wanted press freedoms to be maintained in both states in accordance with the union charter.

Detained ORT correspondent Pavel Sheremet had already been accused by authorities of biased reporting and stripped of his press accreditation. Mr. Lukashenko said Mr. Sheremet was the pay of foreign powers.

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A Federal Express MD-11 cargo plane lies burning upside down on the tarmac at Newark International Airport in Newark, New Jersey. Five crew members miraculously escaped unhurt when the plane arriving from Anchorage, Alaska, crash-landed, overturned and burst into flames about 200 yards from a terminal (Reuters photo)

U.S. cargo plane crash-lands at Newark

NEWARK (R) — Five crew members miraculously escaped unhurt when their Federal Express MD-11 cargo plane crash-landed early Thursday at Newark International Airport, overturned and burst into flames, officials said.

The five flight crew crawled to safety through a cockpit window after the crash at 1:35 a.m. EDT about 200 metres from a terminal, a spokesman for the New York/New Jersey Port Authority said.

"It was a very hard landing," port authority spokesman Allen Morrison said. "The plane, on impact, flipped over and began to burn. All five crew members on board were able to crawl

out the cockpit window. They all walked away from it," Mr. Morrison said. They were treated for unspecified minor injuries at Elizabeth General Hospital in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

"We're very pleased that no one was injured seriously and we're looking forward to them returning to work," FedEx spokesman Chris Atkins said at Newark Airport. Hours after the crash, firefighters were still battling the burning, charred wreckage with foam.

The airport, one of the busiest in the United States, was closed for several hours before reopening at 7:33 a.m. EDT for some departures, another port authority spokesman said.

Arriving aircraft were being diverted to John F. Kennedy International Airport and La Guardia Airport in New York, officials said.

The cause of the crash was not known. Officials said National Transportation Safety Board investigators would visit the site to begin their probe once the blaze was extinguished.

"Pieces of the plane are scattered on the runway," Mr. Morrison added. The fuselage was missing both wings and the tail section, witnesses said.

CBS Radio quoted a witness as saying he had seen flames coming from the plane before it crashed.

The wide-body aircraft was flying into Newark

from Anchorage, Alaska, according to Warren Perkins, a Federal Express hub command centre agent in Memphis.

"It is one of the larger types of aircraft in our fleet," Mr. Perkins said.

Fedex is the world's biggest cargo airline, carrying 3.77 million scheduled freight tonnes in 1996, ahead of Lufthansa with 2.88 million tonnes, according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

Fedex, which has 23 MD-11s in its fleet, is also the biggest U.S. domestic cargo carrier, with 2.97 million tonnes last year, ahead of UPS with 2.60 million.

Afghan Taleban warn press to report 'reality' about war

KABUL (Agencies) — A senior Taleban official lashed out at journalists Friday, warning foreign correspondents they could be expelled unless they report "the reality" of Afghanistan's civil war.

The warning by Interior Minister Khairullah Khairkhwa came as Taleban soldiers face off against their enemies just 15 kilometres north of the war-weary Afghan capital.

The Taleban was angered by reports saying soldiers from neighbouring Pakistan, an ally of the Taleban, were fighting alongside the Islamic militia north of Kabul.

"Across Afghanistan, you cannot find more than 50 Pakistanis fighting the holy war with the Taleban," he said. He said "they are Muslims and we can not persuade them to leave Afghanistan."

Pakistan is considered a close ally of the Taleban's and opposition forces repeatedly accuse Pakistan of arming, training and fighting alongside the Taleban.

Pakistan has denied the accusation, but says that many of those fighting in Afghanistan are Afghan nationals who have been studying at religious schools in Pakistan.

During the 1980s Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan hosted more than 5 million Afghan refugees. At least 1.5 million still are living here.

Mr. Khairkhwa told foreign correspondents "to report the reality of our country or otherwise there is no room for journalists to work."

The warning came as artillery and rocket fire reverberated throughout Kabul from the sporadic fighting between Taleban and opposition forces north of the capital.

Mr. Khairkhwa said the Taleban captured Guldara town, 15 kilometres in mountains north of the city, from forces led by ousted Defence Minister Ahmed Shah Masood, a leader of the opposition.

But the AFP correspondent witnessed a fierce Taleban attack being beaten back barely 20 kilometres north of Kabul. With fierce artillery and mortar battles raging from dawn to the early afternoon, including heavy machine gun fire from Taleban-controlled hilltops overlooking Hossein Kot, the front lines remain unchanged.

"We are strong at the moment and are able to push the Taleban out of Kabul," a frontline commander loyal to ousted government military strongman Ahmad Shah Masood asserted.

On Wednesday Masood predicted that Kabul would fall "within three to seven days," provided the Taleban did not gain fresh recruits from neighbouring Pakistan.

The forward positions here are, however, flanked to the east by hilltops held by Taleban fighters.

At one stage during a heavy gun battle, a group of Taleban were seen by AFP attempting to charge down the hills and seize Hossein Kot, but a burst of machine-gun fire sent them running with equal pace back up the hill.

A Taleban jet was also active early Thursday, dropping at

least one bomb on the Masood-held town of Mir Bacha Kot, around eight kilometres north of here.

All 50 beds in one first aid post north of here were filled with wounded from Thursday's fighting, of which at least 10 were military.

The ex-government commander here conceded that his forces were hampered by supply problems over the crucial Salang highway, where Masood fighters blew up a bridge earlier this year to stem a Taleban advance.

The Salang Highway — which begins 77 kilometres north of Kabul — traverses the snow-capped Hindu Kush mountains and links Masood fighters to the northern stronghold of the opposition alliance.

"Once our supplies are stronger we will be able to make the final push," the commander said.

Scores of reinforcements loyal to Masood have been arriving in the plains north of Kabul for the past two days, signalling little possibility for immediate peace in the fertile farming area.

However, other opposition members — including troops loyal to ethnic-Uzbek warlord Abdul Malik and a Shiite Muslim faction — have yet to join Masood's fighters in the area.

Fighters at the frontline, all donning their characteristic floppy cloth caps, said their motivation in battling the turbaned Taleban was the large numbers of Pakistani fighters they have encountered at the front.

"We have captured a lot of Pakistanis ... they do not belong here," one Masood fighter said.

Despite the confidence of Masood fighters, Taleban fighters on the other side of lines are showing equal determination in defending the war-shattered city they seized in September last year.

Meanwhile a U.N. envoy put off a peace trip to northern Afghanistan Friday, the second interruption in two days in his attempt to head off a bloody battle for the capital Kabul.

Envoy Norbert Holl was to have arrived in the opposition alliance headquarters of Mazar-e-Sharif Friday, but U.N. officials said he was not coming at the moment and they had no new date for the trip.

There was no immediate explanation for the second postponement of Mr. Holl's trip after one Thursday, when the alliance fighting the dominant Taleban Islamic militia said at the last moment that their leaders were unavailable for talks.

United Nations officials in Mazar-e-Sharif said Thursday the talks had been put off until Friday because alliance leaders were out of the northern city where the negotiations were to be held.

A senior Pakistani Foreign Ministry official, Ifkhar Mursheed, could also not go to the southern Afghan city of Kandahar Thursday for talks with Taleban officials because of bad weather and was now due to visit there Saturday.

Martian forecast cold and dusty, but no rain

PASADENA (R) — Space officials issued a weather forecast for Mars Thursday, giving humans the clearest idea yet of the climate on another planet.

Based on images and data sent back from the pathfinder craft, there are no blue skies over the red planet, but plenty of clouds, although don't expect it to ever rain.

Sounding like a TV weatherman, Pathfinder meteorologist, Robert Haberle told reporters at a weekly briefing: "The weather report on Mars for Sol (Martian day) 26. The pressure is 6.71 millibars and falling. Daytime temperatures are eight degrees above zero Fahrenheit, with winds light from the west."

Continuing the spoof forecast, he added, "We expect continued cool temperatures around 10 degrees F with overnight lows around minus 105 F, and a chance of late-night or early morning clouds."

More seriously, he said unprecedented readings — taken every four seconds for a whole day — show Mars to have a turbulent atmosphere, with major oscillations in air pressure and huge fluctuations in temperatures of 30-40 degrees F in seconds or minutes.

His colleague Mark Lemmon said the pink clouds in the skies over Mars were composed predominantly of dust, but they also contained "watered particles."

"There is water on Mars, no question," Mr. Haberle said. "But it's definitely not liquid — rather ice or particles. It will definitely not rain on Mars."

"There's a white sun with pink around it at sunset, but no blue sky anywhere on Mars," Mr. Lemmon said.

Project scientist Matt Golombek said the data about Mars' atmosphere — clouds and pressure changes — were some of the most significant discoveries of the Pathfinder mission, which landed on the planet on July 4.

Japan weather bureau says N. Korea drought serious

TOKYO (R) — Preliminary data backs statements by famine-stricken North Korea that it has been suffering from a serious heat wave and drought for the last two months, Japan's meteorological agency said Friday.

According to the agency's compilation of preliminary day-to-day data on temperature and rainfall, most parts of North Korea received less than half the average amount of rainfall for June and July.

In the most extreme case, Wonsan, on North Korea's east coast had only 20 mm of rain during July, or just seven per cent of the average rainfall for that month.

The capital, Pyongyang, had only 32 mm of rain in June, or 35 per cent of the average for the month, and 125 mm or 44 per cent of the average in July.

Average temperatures exceeded the norm by about two degrees Celsius in those two months, an official of the agency's Climate Information Bureau said.

"This data, although raw, appears to show a serious case of drought," the official said.

He said that the day-to-day data, classified as Synop and exchanged among members of the World Meteorological Organisation, was only "Working data" and should not be considered accurate, because of occasional input errors and missing transmissions.

North Korea has not yet provided the more accurate set of weather data, compiled on a monthly basis and called Climat, for June and July, he said.

Earlier this week, North Korea's state-run press termed the current heat wave the worst in 61 years and said the subsequent drought was inflicting serious damage on agriculture and other domains of the national economy.

Devastating floods in 1994 and 1995 washed away a substantial portion of North Korea's crop acreage.

International aid agencies have stepped up food appeals for the Stalinist state, warning of imminent starvation, particularly among small children.

The Rome-based U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) launched a fresh appeal earlier this month for \$46 million in food aid for North Korea on top of an earlier request for \$95.5 million.

He said the carrier had 1,130 tonnes of heavy fuel oil and 107 tonnes of diesel and the authority had considered the spillage consequences if the vessel did sink.

"The likely drifts would take it to the north towards Sumatra, 1,000 nautical miles away," he said. "However, because the fuel is heavy fuel oil, most would drop to the bottom of the sea."

The maritime union of Australia, which represents all 10,000 Australian seamen, responded angrily to the Goodwill incident, calling for a ban of Panamanian-registered vessels in Australian waters.

Mr. Gray said a salvage team from Singapore was heading to the carrier to make an assessment.

"There is a possibility the carrier could sink. But we can't do much about that

until we get advice from the salvage team, which should be at the site by the weekend," he said.

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Hopes dim for Australia landslide survivors

THREDBO (Agencies) — Four people have been confirmed dead in the wreckage of two ski-lodges which were destroyed in a landslide here, police said Friday.

But three of the corpses remained trapped under a collapsed concrete slab and emergency workers were attempting to free them.

The body of a man was pulled from the rubble late Thursday as rescuers toiled into the night in the faint hope of finding survivors among the total of 20 believed trapped inside.

After two nights of freezing temperatures since Wednesday night's landslide at the ski resort of Thredbo, frustration began to show on the faces of the searchers who were unable to remove the second victim due to fears of another slide.

Police said the chance now of freeing survivors from the tonnes of collapsed concrete, twisted metal, dirt and splintered trees were "infinitesimally small."

A total of 20 people are believed to have been buried

at Thredbo, southwest of Sydney in Australia's snowy mountains, when a steep hillside gave way, sending one ski lodge crashing into another and burying all the occupants.

Increasing the frustration, searchers reported sighting the foot of a third body poking through the debris Wednesday, but it was found to be only a bag of potatoes, a search spokesman later told Reuters.

Friends and family of the victims gathered Friday at Thredbo's small, sunlit church to pray for survivors, but police made it clear that relatives were not being given false hope.

"I am quite confident they understand the enormity of the task that faces us," Superintendent Charlie Sanderson told reporters.

Police feel many of the victims are trapped under a massive weight of concrete, but the instability of the slope has forced rescuers to painstakingly cut the slabs into pieces before removal.

Optic fibre cameras and

thermal imaging equipment have failed to show signs of life in the wreckage of the Carinya and Bimbadeen lodges.

Search crews are no longer putting a time limit on the rescue effort, despite saying at the outset that they were likely to reach the victims within two days.

The work of picking through the rubble has been fraught with danger and hazards such as leaking fuel from crushed cars.

The rubble is 10 metres deep in places.

"We are not going to do that (speed up the search) until we are satisfied that every person is out of that rubble," Inspector Barry Smith told reporters.

Search crews have been forced to shore up the site as they work to prevent a further slide, a danger that delayed any concerted rescue effort for 10 hours after the landslide.

Police said those buried included a middle-aged couple from California, a New Zealand woman and 17

Australians. Messages of sympathy poured in from around the world Friday to the small, close-knit community which swells to 4,000 in the skiing season from a summer population of about 500.

Britain's Queen Elizabeth, who is also Australia's head of state, sent a message of sympathy to the victims' friends and families, Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer put short an official visit to Japan, and Prime Minister John Howard issued a special statement of sympathy from his hospital bed.

New South Wales Premier Bob Carr toured the site Friday and talked with victims' relatives.

Church services were held around the country Friday. In Canberra, government dignitaries and community leaders joined in prayer.

Experts believe seepage from a mountain spring may have caused the earth to give way.

Yeltsin names vice premier for ethnic relations

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin named Friday a prominent figure from the troubled north Caucasus region as a new deputy prime minister for ethnic relations, Interfax news agency said.

Ramazan Abdulatipov, a former deputy speaker of the upper house of parliament before he was elected a deputy to the lower house in 1996, will be the seventh deputy premier in the government.

He comes from the multi-ethnic north Caucasus republic of Dagestan, which borders the Caspian Sea and

the rebel republic of Chechnya, and is a member of the tiny Avar ethnic minority.

His appointment comes amid renewed tension between two other north Caucasus Russian republics — Ingushetia and North Ossetia.

Mr. Yeltsin urged calm in the region on Thursday and said he would invite the leaders of the two republics to meet with him soon.

Ingush refugees trying to return to their homes inside North Ossetia, from where they were driven out in a 1992 war, have come under violent attack in recent

weeks. An armed group ransacked a camp housing Ingush refugees in Turskoye village in the Prigorodny region Tuesday, beating dozens of people, taking seven hostages and burning down 83 huts, Russian reports said.

On July 17, a rocket-propelled grenade was fired at a bus carrying refugees, injuring 17, 10 of them seriously.

Russian Security Council Secretary Ivan Rybkin ordered the creation of a task force on the conflict, bringing together officials from the interior, secret service

and defence ministries, as well as the finance ministry.

Mr. Rybkin also announced that Mr. Yeltsin might meet with Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov at the start of August, following criticism by Chechen leaders that Moscow is not doing enough to rebuild its devastated post-war economy.

Chechnya declared independence in 1991 and drove out Russian troops in a 1994-1996 war that left tens of thousands of people dead and much of the tiny republic in ruins.

U.N. military observers arrive in Brazzaville

KINSHASA (AFP) — U.N. military observers arrived in the troubled Congolese capital, Brazzaville, government radio announced Friday.

The 11-strong mission is to assess the needs of a peacekeeping force for Brazzaville, where talks between government and rebel forces have reached an impasse.

More than 4,000 people

have died in six weeks of fighting between the rival factions, according to state-run radio. It started when the government tried to disarm the private militia of former strongman Denis Sassou Nguesso.

Immediately after their arrival Thursday, the observers toured the Maya-Maya Airport and met peace talks leaders, the radio said. Friday they are to meet

President Pascal Lissouba and Mr. Sassou Nguesso, the radio said.

It quoted a member of the U.N. mission saying the deployment of peace keepers would depend on "the political will of the Congolese people."

The mission is to report to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Talks stalled Wednesday when Mr. Sassou Nguesso

rejected a proposed peace plan and Mr. Lissouba dismissed his counter-proposals.

Under the plan, put forward by international mediator, Omar Bongo, Gabon's president, the rivals would form a reconciliation government and an inter-African peace force would be deployed in Brazzaville.

The proposal also set conditions for elections.

including an officer were killed Thursday night.

A Defence Ministry spokesman said another Tiger guerrilla was shot dead by army snipers in the same area Thursday.

Fighting erupted again Friday in the north with the military attacking three LTTE cadres who had infiltrated an army defence line near the town of Omanthai, local officials said.

Heavy fighting which killed at least 74 fighters on both sides gripped northern and eastern Sri Lanka Friday as Tamil Tiger rebels and government forces exchanged artillery fire, officials said.

Guerrillas of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) fired mortar bombs at the Shanthivel military base in the eastern district of Batticaloa Friday,

killing two soldiers and a civilian, officials said.

Security forces retaliated but it was not immediately clear if there were any rebel casualties in the counter attack. There was no immediate reaction from the LTTE to the military reports.

The Defence Ministry said the worst fighting was near the northern town of Nedunkerni where 50 Tiger guerrillas and 17 soldiers,

including an officer were killed Thursday night.

A Defence Ministry spokesman said another Tiger guerrilla was shot dead by army snipers in the same area Thursday.

Fighting erupted again Friday in the north with the military attacking three LTTE cadres who had infiltrated an army defence line near the town of Omanthai, local officials said.

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Lessons on promises

WHEN BENYAMIN Netanyahu was elected prime minister in 1996, his narrow victory was linked to his promise to ensure security and to shield Israelis from attacks by militants and extremists. But in the first real test, the prime minister failed. From this Israelis should learn two lessons in order not to be misled or fooled again.

First, that the definition of security is not the one that Netanyahu, and those who think like him, support. Security does not mean twisting the concepts of the peace agreement to the liking and benefit of one side over the other and surely is not through military might. It has been proven before and underlined again last Wednesday, that Israeli provocations, whether in building settlements or delaying withdrawal and impeding full Palestinian authority, only exacerbate Arab frustration and incite bloodshed.

The path of peace, trust, concessions, understanding and fairness is the only hope of security and stability. And as such, Israel must realise that extremism, arrogance and its persistence on approaching negotiations only on its terms serve to provoke Arab anger.

Second, Israeli leaders are not, and will never be, capable of ensuring security as Netanyahu promised.

Wednesday's bloody attack in Jerusalem was the first that Netanyahu had to face since he was elected to fight extremism. What did he do?

He immediately put the blame on President Yasser Arafat and his failure to control the areas under his rule. The responsibility he promised to shoulder was quickly shifted to the Palestinian leader who was hammered for not cracking down hard on extremists. Netanyahu even decided to stop the financial proceeds to the Palestinian National Authority and called on the U.S. and European countries to halt the financial assistance they extend to the Palestinians.

When Netanyahu was elected on the pledge of security to the Israeli people, Arafat was not part of the equation and was not mentioned as the person who will be keeping and looking after such a promise. To the contrary, Netanyahu at the time refused for many weeks to meet and deal with Arafat and to shake his hand.

Isn't it strange that Arafat suddenly becomes the primary target of responsibility of the attack in Jerusalem when such a task was the sole duty of the Israeli leader?

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i daily said that Israel is the sole party responsible for the suicide attacks and the consequences of its occupation of Arab territories. No clause under the Oslo agreement says that the Palestinians, with their limited self-rule and powers, should assume responsibility for Israel's security and the security of the Israelis within the boundaries of their own state which is well protected by a nation armed to the teeth, said Tareq Masarweh. The writer said that Israel, which has been justifying its continued occupation of Arab lands with security reasons, amasses nuclear weapons and long-range missiles to ensure its own security and continues to disregard and mock the U.N. resolutions, is paying the price of its arrogance. How can the Palestinian leadership be responsible for the suicide attacks which occur inside Israel itself and how can the Palestinian police control the feelings of millions of Arabs and Muslims who are provoked every day by the Israeli occupation forces and the Jewish settlers, asked the writer. He said that the Palestinians cannot protect the interests of Israel whose repressive actions against the Palestinians never end and whose continued aggression sows the seeds of hatred and violence.

A WRITER for Al Dustour decried the practice of firing during social occasions, especially during weddings. Mohammad Daoud said that the stray bullets fired on these occasions have been responsible for the death and injury of scores of people and responsible for converting joy into sadness and grief among the members of the community. It is no secret that arms, ranging from hand guns to automatic weapons, are still in the hands of people in urban and rural regions and that these weapons are fired now and then on occasions and at the whims and desires of people, young and old, noted the writer. The presence of weapons in the hands of the public is a dangerous thing and no matter how hard the concerned authorities try to control the situation, they can never succeed to prevent the firing except through a nationwide campaign to collect all weapons. He called on the government to enforce the law and not to suffice itself with imprisoning the culprits but rather remove the weapons which have been causing a headache to the authorities and causing untold sufferings for the public.

Jordanian Perspective

'Security for Israelis will remain an elusive dream without a peace settlement with the Palestinians'

THE MANGLED bodies and wreckage we saw in West Jerusalem July 30 clearly represents the state of the Middle East peace process today. The dismembered bodies of the victims of the despicable attack against civilians symbolise the fragmentation of the hopes that the Oslo agreements sparked and the wreckage of the Jerusalem market represents the chaotic situation in the entire region.

We cannot but condemn the attack, or any other action against civilians, whether in Jerusalem or anywhere else. We in Jordan have always believed in and lived by the principle that violence cannot achieve anything and cannot replace dialogue and reason, even when it comes to our worst enemies. At the same time, we cannot but point out that Wednesday's bombing attack, regardless of who ever claimed responsibility for it, is the fruit of the illogical and arrogant policies adopted by the Israeli government.

It also shows the utter failure of the "hard line" followed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to ensure what he himself describes as his goal of "security for Israelis first and peace with the Arabs second." The attack is nothing but a sharp reminder that Netanyahu has managed to build so much frustration among the Palestinians that even the moderates among them are today convinced that no diplomacy and reasoning is going to work with the Israeli premier and that the only means to shake the Israeli

body is through violence. And that is precisely what they seem to have done.

The inevitable scenario that will follow is additional pressure on Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to "crack down" on Palestinian "hardliners" of the Islamic Resistance Movement and Islamic Jihad. We should expect to hear Israeli and American leaders "demanding" that Arafat "rein in" the militants in the Palestinian ranks.

But how far is it possible for Arafat to "crack down" on his people who are demanding their legitimate rights, on the one hand, and to deal with any trace of optimism with his "hardline partner" Netanyahu to advance the quest for those rights, on the other? Will an Arafat crack down on Palestinian militants guarantee that Netanyahu will live up to the Israeli commitments under the Oslo agreements? Will it lead to Netanyahu's abandoning his plans to swallow the land of Palestine while portraying himself as genuinely interested in peace with the Arabs?

So what is the purpose of pressuring Arafat when it is clear that all such pressure is aimed at doing away with the strength in the Palestinian struggle for liberation and serve Israel's goal of perpetuating its occupation of the Palestinian lands?

Netanyahu and his allies should stop in their track for a moment, if indeed that is possible for them, and take a fresh look based on logic. There is no way the mighty

army of Israel or any crack down by the Palestinian National Authority will stop suicide attacks by a group of determined people who can find no light at the end of the tunnel.

Coming as it did just before the expected arrival in the region of American troubleshooter Dennis Ross in a fresh bid to lift the logjam in the peace process, we cannot but be convinced that the perpetrators of the suicide blast only wanted to preempt any success of the Ross mission, and they did. Not that Ross was bringing any sweeping idea — Washington seems incapable of moving or even thinking in the right direction except endorsing Israeli positions — but there was a ray of hope that a U.S. intervention at this point could inject some vitality and kickstart the stalled Palestinian negotiations.

All trace of such hope has been wiped out. It would take months before any move can be expected in the peace process. And as long as there is no movement in the peace process, there will be more suicide attacks, whether in Jordan or elsewhere like it or not.

The key lies in Israeli hands — Netanyahu as his likes should realise and accept that international legitimacy rather than military might is the basis for a peace settlement with the Palestinians. As long as they do not, there cannot be any escape from the reality that "security for Israelis" will remain an elusive dream.

Good reasons for Washington to start talking with Tehran

By Richard W. Murphy

WASHINGTON — With Mohammad Khatami taking office as Iran's new president on Aug. 2, it is time for the United States to rethink its relationship with the largest country in the Gulf region.

We have been steadily, at times violently, at odds with the Iranian regime since 1979. Our distaste for Tehran's revolutionary clerics started with the embassy hostage crisis that same year. The Iran-contras episode in 1986 convinced most U.S. policymakers that dealing with Iran inevitably meant embarrassment for America.

We still have real problems with the regime over its support for international terrorism, its nuclear weapons ambitions and its opposition to the Arab-Israeli peace process. It is now clear, however, that we will make little progress on these issues unless we engage the Iranians in serious high-level negotiations without preconditions.

I propose that in the coming months the United States offer the Iranians talks at the level of deputy secretary of state or under-secretary of state. Such talks would put our exchanges on a new footing, granting the Islamic regime a legitimacy that we have withheld until now.

Our current policy of containment boils down to shunning Iran as a "rogue regime." This is not viable for the long run, and it does not take into account the complex and often positive Iranian roles in Central Asia and the Middle East.

In Tajikistan, for example, the Iranians helped mediate last month's peace agreement between the belligerents in the civil war.

Iran is also a guarantor of the agreement.

In the case of the Gulf war, the Iranians opposed the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and have supported U.N. Security Council sanctions imposed on Iraq.

The election of a new president affords the opportunity to establish a productive dialogue.

Washington was surprised when Mr. Khatami won an overwhelming 69 per cent of the popular vote on May 23. The regime's preferred candidate, Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri, the speaker of parliament, was expected to win. Mr. Khatami's victory was a protest vote against the regime and a generalised expression of hope for social and economic change (less ideology, more jobs) sought primarily by Iranian women and youth.

U.S. economic sanctions have probably played some role in pressuring the regime and at the same time impoverishing the population, but the major factors depressing the economy have been the regime's corruption and mismanagement.

It is wrong to conclude that Mr. Khatami won because of U.S. containment policy, and that all we need do is keep the pressure on to "help Khatami." Through direct contact we will be better able to anticipate events while continuing to operate as the dominant power in the world and in the Gulf.

Improvement in relations between the United States and Iran will be slow and difficult to achieve, but it could benefit both countries as well as the Middle East as a whole. Until we probe, we cannot know what substance there is behind the indications that Mr.

Khatami's election could lead Iran to more normal dealings with us.

It will not be easy to bring about change. Mr. Khatami's freedom to alter Iran's approach may be limited. His domestic critics will say that we still seek the overthrow of the Islamic regime and intend to block its rightful role in Gulf security.

Nonetheless, while it is early to talk of an Iranian warming towards us, Mr. Khatami's recent statements have been strikingly conciliatory towards the West. His cabinet choices will provide some concrete evidence of whether he has the necessary mandate from Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, to make revisions in foreign and domestic policy.

President Bill Clinton has expressed hope for improved relations. But his flexibility is constrained by legislation sanctioning Iran as a "state supporting terrorism." He must also heed Israel's concerns and those of some of our Arab allies.

Another stumbling block is the ongoing investigation into allegations that Iran was involved in last year's Khobar bombing in Saudi Arabia, which killed 19 American servicemen. That investigation may end with no clear conclusion as to responsibility. If the evidence proves official Iranian authorship, our relations will return to the freezing point.

Mr. Clinton's statement after the election was the most gracious about Iran in many years. Describing the vote as a reaffirmation of the democratic process there, he said he had "never been pleased about the estrangement between the people of the United States and the people of Iran."

who are very great people."

However, he also cited concerns about support for terrorism, violent subversion of the Middle East peace process and acquiring nuclear weapons.

Eventually, all U.S.-Iranian differences must be discussed. A promising place to begin might be a quiet exploration of our allegations about Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions.

Late last month, General Binford Peay, who heads the U.S. Central Command, which has responsibility for American forces in the Gulf, estimated that Iran could have nuclear arms by the end of the century. This estimate may not represent a full consensus among administration experts, but it is one measure of the urgency felt in Washington about this problem.

Iran is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and has made positive statements about its readiness for international inspections. Negotiators can build on this.

Arms control is another reason to take advantage of a potential opening for dialogue. The Arab-Israeli peace process set up by the 1991 Madrid conference provided for multilateral talks on arms control. These talks excluded Iraq and Iran. The negotiations have been stalled for the past two-and-a-half years because of the Egyptian demand that Israel agree to discuss its own nuclear programme.

Whenever these talks restart, it must be recognised that there can be no effective arms control regime in the region unless Iran and, eventually, Iraq participate.

Any sustained diplomatic engagement with Iran would face congressional

opposition. For more than a decade, not a single U.S. representative or senator has visited Tehran. The swift passage of the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996, meanwhile, owed much to the still unexplained explosion of TWA Flight 800 a few weeks earlier.

Americans who favour maintaining the U.S.-Iranian status quo assert that no new engagement is necessary. They say Iran has known for at least a decade what it must do to improve relations with the United States, and that appropriate diplomatic channels remain open for Iranian use. This is only half true.

I helped prepare the State Department's post-fragate formulation in the late 1980s. The United States was ready, we said, to have a dialogue about our differences with an "authorised Iranian representative." This was designed to prevent the kind of unauthorised back alley negotiations that backfired so disastrously in the Iran-contras scandal.

After more than a decade of repetition, coupled with our harsh public rhetoric about Iranian actions and intentions, this invitation is unpersuasive. High officials in Tehran likely assume that all we have in mind is a meeting where we would present our charges and tell them to return when they have corrected their behaviour.

For different reasons, Israel and some of our major Gulf Arab allies have been comfortable with our policy towards Iran to date. Some of them will be uneasy if we try to warm up the U.S.-Iranian relationship. The Israelis worry about

Iran's nuclear ambitions and long-range ballistic missile programme. They also accuse Iran of sponsoring violent opposition to the Arab-Israeli peace process. We share these concerns, both of which can best be dealt with in the context of open dialogue.

Our Arabian Peninsula allies worry that Iran's power relative to Iraq has grown since the Gulf war. A majority of Gulf Arab leaders agree that the Islamic Republic has been more aggressive towards them than the shah was. "Smile and subvert" is how one Arab foreign minister described to me Iran's policy towards his country.

Yet several Gulf Arab leaders have told me privately that they concur with the proposition that improved U.S.-Iranian relations would be in their countries' interest.

Although they welcome our support and although America's credibility as their guarantor against external aggression, they do not know how long we will stay around, and they are condemned to live with Iran as their neighbour.

Iranian leaders see their country as the major Gulf power. Their ambitions for Gulf leadership match the shah's. They resent our hegemony in the region. They want us to withdraw our forces but know that it is not going to happen.

The writer, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, was U.S. assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs from 1983 to 1989, and earlier served as ambassador to Syria and Saudi Arabia. This article is reprinted from The Washington Post.

Tycoons put pressure on Yeltsin's liberal 'heir'

MOSCOW (R) — Boris Nemtsov, the 37-year-old boy wonder of Russian liberal reforms, has endured his biggest test in four short months in government as media owned by wealthy government backers have turned their fire on him.

He has a good chance of surviving the ordeal with his presidential ambitions intact, analysts said. But it is too soon to predict the outcome of the struggle, which could set the course of Russia's economic and political development for years.

Since President Boris Yeltsin formed an effectively new government under veteran Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin in March and gave two posts of first deputy prime minister to Mr. Nemtsov and Anatoly Chubais, the cabinet has scored a number of economic successes and appeared to work in unity.

Mr. Nemtsov, unlike the unpopular Chubais, has backed in media attention. But his detractors gave the clearest sign yet on Thursday they want to nip in the bud a

strategy engineered, according to Kremlin sources, by Mr. Chubais to appoint Mr. Nemtsov as the heir apparent to Mr. Yeltsin.

A spokesman for one of Mr. Nemtsov's wealthy opponents criticised Mr. Yeltsin for appearing too often on television "fondly stroking the head of his political grandson" and suggesting the head of state should slap down the young liberals around him.

Mr. Nemtsov, whom Mr. Yeltsin tipped as a possible successor even before summoning him from the provinces to Moscow in March, has been accused of colluding with the consortium that won a stake in state telecoms company Svyazinvest at an auction last Friday.

Mr. Nemtsov said the losers in the bidding were having "hysteries" and accused them of resisting attempts to clean up the previously murky privatisation process.

Vladimir Gusinsky, one of two businessmen who government sources say backed

the losing Svyazinvest bid, denied on Thursday he was involved in the auction. The other, Boris Berezovsky, who is on secondment to Mr. Yeltsin's security council, has not commented.

Mr. Gusinsky's spokesman Vyacheslav Kostikov, once Mr. Yeltsin's own press secretary, called the auction a scandal and urged Mr. Chernomyrdin and Mr. Yeltsin to act.

The row marks the final breakdown of an alliance formed last year by powerful banking and media bosses and Mr. Chubais, then Mr. Yeltsin's campaign chief, to ensure the president's reelection.

In part, money is at the root of it. Some of the tycoons are angry that Mr. Chubais has changed the rules on privatisation. But, as Mr. Kostikov said, this concerns politics as much as commerce.

Mr. Nemtsov said this week that the reaction of the losers, whom he branded "robber capitalists", may lead them to ally themselves with the Communist and nationalist opposition against the

government.

But analysts said the immediate battle lines appeared rather to be drawn within the government, with stolid former gas industry boss Chernomyrdin, 58, on one side and the liberal reformers led by Mr. Chubais, 42, on the other.

The two men have insisted since Mr. Chubais joined the cabinet from Mr. Yeltsin's office in March that they are working together. Mr. Chernomyrdin is in his fifth year as prime minister and would have the support of many business leaders to succeed Mr. Yeltsin.

However, Mr. Chubais has been very much in the ascendancy this year, helped by the president's return to health after heart surgery and his stated determination to see through market reforms before his final term ends in 2000.

Kremlin sources say Mr. Chubais, whose deep unpopularity with voters rules him out of the election himself, has begun to push the telegraphic Nemtsov as Mr.

But some analysts say Mr. Gusinsky and Mr. Berezovsky appear to have thrown their weight behind Mr. Chernomyrdin.

Last week Mr. Chernomyrdin criticised liberal privatisation chief Alfred Kokh, and this week he ordered an inquiry into the Svyazinvest deal. Mr. Kostikov forecast "experienced" politicians would disassociate themselves from it, leaving the "activists" isolated.

But Mr. Chernomyrdin has yet to commit himself openly to splitting the cabinet and it is far from clear he will do so.

Mr. Kostikov warned darkly that Mr. Yeltsin was a man with a record of throwing out advisers and said he could react to the present "scandal" by reasserting himself at the expense of his current inner circle.

But other commentators said Mr. Chubais — and hence Mr. Nemtsov — was in a strong position with the 66-year-old Kremlin leader.

"I would expect Chubais and Yeltsin to clamp down on

Chernomyrdin and Berezovsky," Anders Aslund, a former Kremlin economic adviser, told Reuters. "Liberal market reforms will continue."

The liberal weekly Obshchaya Gazeta commented that Mr. Chubais was too skilled a political operator to have left himself exposed to attack and prone to a change of heart by Mr. Yeltsin.

"The only one who might hurt him is the president. But Yeltsin, no matter how highly he thinks of Berezovsky and Gusinsky, will not sacrifice at least four deputy premiers for their sake," it said, naming Mr. Chubais, Mr. Nemtsov and two others.

The testing times may be far from over for Mr. Nemtsov, however.

One Kremlin source told Reuters that Mr. Chubais himself planned to see how his popular protégé coped in the dirtier end of Russian politics. Whether last week's row was what he had in mind is not at all clear. But it is certainly testing Mr. Nemtsov's

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Meridor: This is a positive process that will probably be completed with the rest of the Arab countries, secure the existence of Israel

Israeli ex-minister of finance, believes that the peace process should be revived to secure a model of "life together". His resignation, he says, was brought about by the way things were "managed" by Premier Netanyahu. He says an improved Palestinian economy will be for the benefit of all sides and that the "on-hold" situation the peace process is in should be broken to make way to a "gradual road" towards peace. Daphne Barak interviews him.



Dan Meridor

QUESTION: How do you feel after your resignation?

ANSWER: I have no uncertainty.

Q: Could you describe "the morning after" (the resignation)?

A: There was no emptiness, there were many meetings with people who wanted to talk about the situation, about my resignation. Of course, it was less crowded.

As minister of finance I would work 16-17 hours a day. Sometimes I would hold 15 different meetings in one day. I did not leave because I did not enjoy it. On the contrary, I really liked the office, the people working there — they are high level people, the work gets done there without small politics.

At the party, I mean the final meeting I held when I left, a senior employee there said: "We never had such an apolitical minister." I consider that a great compliment.

Q: Regarding foreign policy, for some reasons,

you have been labelled as a moderate. Is that right?

A: Look, it is now exactly 20 years since the first discussions were held between Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat, Egypt, and later Jordan, signed peace with us. We began talking with the Palestinians at the 1991 Madrid conference. The same with Syria, Morocco is now open to Israelis. This is a positive process that will probably be completed with the rest of the Arab countries, that will secure the existence of the state of Israel, with a readiness to build an example of life together.

At the same time, there is a Muslim extremist section — Iraq, Iran and

Libya — which develops non-conventional arms, supports terrorist organizations and represents a threat to peace.

Q: The Oslo agreement, is it good for the Jewish (Israeli) people?

A: It was not a good agreement. It created very high expectations for the Palestinians, and it created a timetable — until May 1999 — within which solutions must be reached to all the complicated problems, to most emotional issues.

Q: Which are they in your opinion?

A: The future of Jerusalem, Arab refugees, final borders. It was a kind of "buy now-pay later" agreement; first the

agreement was reached, they received the Nobel Prize, then...

Q: Do you support Netanyahu's suggestion to end the stage system and discuss the end of the agreements immediately?

A: No, no, no. There is a logic to the gradual concept. We need to go in two directions at the same time: maintain discussions while being both flexible and stubborn, when needed. But if the Arab side does not show flexibility, there will be no agreement. Up to now they have only received. It is necessary to take the gradual road of (giving) more and more power to the Palestinian National Authority.

Q: Which means you do not support the Palestinian state?

A: For the time being it is an authority. So then two things will happen: slowly the area in their hands will grow. No, do not press me into the direction of percentages. And their economic situation must be improved; we are not interested in their being poor and frustrated. A healthy socio-economic situation must be created. But what is clear is that there will be crisis and drawbacks. But every drawback should not bring about terror, mines. A situation must be created where they have something to lose if the process breaks down. And this is only a gradual road.

Q: How would you describe the stage where the "peace process" is at today?

A: It is on an on-hold

situation; there are hardly any contacts, the process must be renewed.

Q: Are you for its renewal?

A: Yes, I believe that the process must be reopened regarding all the practical issues: policy matters, economic matters and cooperation in security matters.

Q: Ariel Sharon unexpectedly met with Abu-Mazen. Did you meet with any top Palestinians?

A: I had many meetings with Nabil Shaath.

Q: What about Yasser Arafat?

A: I did not meet with him. At one time I was asked by Arafat's side to meet him.

Q: And?

A: The prime minister thought that the time was not right.

Q: How can the problem of Jerusalem be solved?

A: It must remain under Israeli sovereignty, but it must have Arabs and Jews living together like other Israeli cities: Upper and Lower Nazareth, Lod. Equal distribution must take place (between Arabs and Jews) of the infrastructure and the resources. At my initiative, the government transferred 130 million shekels for infrastructure in East Jerusalem. I hope this trend will continue.

Q: What do you call the step you took that caused a turmoil in the area's politics: resigning or being fired?

A: I took the step, I resigned. Although I do not believe there was great sorrow at the prime minister's office when it

happened. Quite a few things were done that could have been avoided. I could not stand it any more.

Q: If elections were announced, would you run for leadership of the Likud Party?

A: I have already said that the Likud needs a different candidate. Regarding the next elections, I am still considering. When the right moment comes, I will announce it.

Q: It seems as if you have already begun your campaign.

A: When I feel it is the right moment, I will announce it.

Q: What is actually a "politician"?

A: I do not like the term "politician"; there is no such profession. I am a lawyer by profession. It is a person who deals with the public's needs. The word politician, however, has been stuck with connotations of power.

Q: The politics you knew (in Menachem Begin's time) were different?

A: There is a certain cynicism that has got stronger. We must go back to the straight, honest road.

Q: Another change seen in Israel is the inclusion of the women, the family, in politics.

A: Not me! My wife and children do not give interviews about me and I do not give interviews about them. Politics and the family must be kept separate, for many reasons.

Q: Which, for example?

A: Why doesn't anyone ask a doctor, a lawyer, an

interviewer like you, what their partners do? There is something very provincial, very low-class in all that. I am glad my wife has her own occupation. If she is interviewed, it is on her own professional matters, not because of me.

Q: You grew up in a Revisionist home.

A: Of course we grew up with a love for Eretz-Israel, for the miracle of Zionism, for the Hebrew language and its songs. But the impression of the Zionist revolution did not take away from the European culture in our education: Antique Greece, Rome, England, Scandinavia.

Q: Did you always want to be a lawyer?

A: My father was a lawyer, so it is natural that I wanted to follow in his footsteps. At one time I contemplated the idea of studying medicine.

Q: What is your greatest worry if Netanyahu manages to stay on?

A: Let's think positively: historically, 800,000 immigrants came from the old Soviet Union to Israel. That is just a dream come true. If we do not give them an income, enable them to adapt socially, it will be a very big waste and it will cause serious historical damage.

I am worried about the stubbornness of Israeli society, the growing clashes about religion, culture, racial background. It is very important that we complete the writing of the Israeli constitution, to make sure that there will be a demo-

cratic nation focused on the people. I pushed in this direction, now it has stopped.

We must continue and move ahead with the peace process.

I hope the economic process that we started will go on, that favouritism is stopped, that economy opens to international competition and that such areas like hi-tech, telecommunications, micro-biology develop.

Q: How do you explain — and many still do not understand — that you did not resign because of the Bar On affair and that you chose to resign over an economic issue?

A: It's just no true. In the Bar On affair my role was in the fact that his appointment did not go through. But I did say: Whatever the legal advisor decides at the investigation, I will accept. They investigated for three months, tens of witnesses, and what did they say in the end? "There is doubt."

Doubt was there before the investigation took place. They did not remove the doubt, so who am I to contradict the conclusion of the legal advisor?

I wanted to be fair to the prime minister, despite the fact that he did not behave as I expected him to. To my regret, it was not only his outlook on economy: all the way, things were managed in a manner.... That's why I left.

Latin America braces for 'El Nino' havoc

By Andrew Cawthorne
Reuter

LIMA — The quaint nickname of the weather phenomenon "El Nino", given by Peruvian fishermen after the baby Jesus because it tends to arrive at Christmas, belies the chaos it brings to economically vulnerable Latin America.

El Nino's already developing freak wind patterns and overheating of the Pacific Ocean threaten to produce a trail of havoc well into 1998 from flooding, droughts and disrupted agriculture and fishing patterns throughout the region.

"From the evidence so far, there's no way that this couldn't continue to develop and be a major El Nino," said Michael Halpert, a research meteorologist at the U.S. government's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Centre.

"I am sure that it can have devastating impacts, which is why we are trying to forecast it as accurately as possible and urge governments to get prepared," he added in a telephone interview from Washington.

El Nino will swell to its peak towards the end of 1997 and in the first half of 1998, with the worst affected countries likely to be Peru and Chile, on South America's Pacific coast.

Its impact will, however, be felt the length of the continent — from increased storms off western Mexico to abnormal rainfall in Argentina. And the possibility of billions of dollars of damage is worrying governments, investors and populace alike.

Chile the first major victim

Sparked by a mysteri-

ous disruption in the atmospheric system which changes wind patterns and water temperatures in the tropical Pacific, El Nino occurs with varying strength every two to seven years and lasts up to 18 months.

Its effects are already being felt. Most dramatically, in Chile, El Nino was blamed in June for the nation's worst flooding in a decade that killed 17 people, forced 60,000 to flee their homes and seriously damaged agriculture and infrastructure.

Santiago, the capital, was drenched by more than 300 mm of rainfall in a month — more than usually falls in a year — while parts of northern Chile, which is mainly desert, received more rain in one month than normally falls in 30 years.

Worse is likely in July and August. "We expect much more extreme events in coming months than we saw in June. Rains will be heavier than normal," said meteorologist Juan Quintana, of the National Meteorological Service in Santiago.

But it wasn't all bad news for Chile. As president Eduardo Frei announced a \$165 million plan to repair flood-damage, Finance Minister Eduardo Aninat said that, far from harming the economy, renovation work should stimulate growth in the construction sector.

And local fishermen are rubbing their hands in glee at the prospect of higher catches as fish migrate south from Peru looking for cooler waters.

Already international scientists are comparing this year with notorious Ninos in 1957-1958 and 1972-1973 and say it could rival the worst this century in 1982-1983,

which caused billions of dollars of damage worldwide.

"This is a big event," said Ants Leetma, director of the U.S. Climate Prediction Centre.

Latin America's worst-hit country in the 1982-83 apparition was Peru, where hundreds died in floods and landslides, tens of thousands were left homeless and damage contributed to a 12 per cent economic downturn.

Already in Peru this year, the warmer sea has brought an Indian summer on the coast and begun to harm the nation's second most important industry, fishing, while unusually cold temperatures in the Andes have killed scores of children.

Anticipating heavy flooding in the north and droughts in the south, President Alberto Fujimori has declared nine of Peru's 24 regions in a state of emergency and earmarked \$19 million for anti-Nino preparations.

Elsewhere in Latin America, Mexico is bracing for more storms on its Pacific coast, which could affect tourist resorts and shipping sites for crude oil, grains and other products.

Central America is unlikely to be hard hit, although Panama's narrow isthmus has already experienced droughts on the Pacific side and flooding on the Atlantic.

Colombia, heavily dependent on energy from hydro-electric generators, is reporting a four degree centigrade temperature rise off its Pacific coast that could spark a severe drought from February next year.

When El Nino last hit in 1992, energy was rationed for a year in Colombia, with homes and businesses losing supplies for up to eight hours a day.

Despite the discomfort, though, many Colombians remember the experience fondly.

"People used to meet up in their homes to play cards or tell stories. It was good for family solidarity. It brought people back together again," a Colombian journalist said. Others recounted how shopping malls, with their own generators, became magnets for residents without electricity.

Colombia's coffee-growing regions are expected to experience a significant drop in rainfall, but this is not seen affecting the crop.

"Paradoxically El Nino could be good for coffee because flowering periods are better when dry spells are longer," said agroclimatologist Orlando Guzman, of Colombia's National Centre for Coffee Research (Cenicafe).

Ecuador on alert Like Peru and Chile, Ecuador's government has put the country on alert and announced plans to spend an initial minimum \$7.5 million in prevention work.

"El Nino is imminent," said Public Works Minister Homero Torres. "We are preparing to carry out maintenance and repair work in the highways, control drainage and sewage systems, strengthening of bridges, build walls to support roads, and clean irrigation channels."

Ecuador, which suffered an estimated \$640 million damage from El Nino in 1982-83, is also anticipating damage to crops such as rice, maize, sugar, Soya and cocoa. "The effects are unpredictable, uncontrollable and unmeasurable. We cannot anticipate what strength it is going to be," said a worried Raul Morales, executive director of the agriculture chamber.

Further south, in the

larger economies of Brazil and Argentina, disruption is also expected but on a smaller scale.

Brazil anticipates higher rainfall in the south and drought in the northeast from El Nino. Its last appearance there in 1991-1992 burst river banks, killing about 30 people and forcing 100,000 to abandon their homes, and also reduced the northeast region's sugarcane harvest.

This time, the phenomenon has already brought unseasonal rains to the south, followed by an Indian summer. The extra rains, expected to return to the south in September, may have an impact on one of Brazil's key commodities — coffee.

Argentina is likely to see heavier rain in the river plate basin and more snow in the Andes, but does not expect widespread damage.

Investors in Latin America are gradually waking up to el Nino and its possible effect on economic growth this year and next, but there is no panic yet.

Rather, they are trusting that recent experiences of El Nino, the stronger state of the region's economies, better forecasting and early preparations will minimise the impact.

"I think there is a growing concern in the markets about El Nino. It is just starting to get across people's radar screens," said William Romary, senior Latin American economist for UBS Securities.

"But it is very hard to judge the economic impact until we know in August, September just how bad it is going to be."

Analysts say the effects of El Nino could knock half to one percentage point off the gross domestic product (GDP) growth of the worst affected countries,

like Peru and Chile. "But I don't expect it to affect the overall growth rate of the region, as

Chile and Peru have relatively small economies compared to Mexico, Argentina and Brazil.

which will remain largely unaffected," Mr. Romary said.

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Business & Finance

Jordan Times, Saturday, August 2, 1997

Conflicting expectations on foreign equity law boosts trading, prices at AFM

By Samir Ghawli
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Contradictory reports, concerning a recommendation to raise the percentage of foreign equity in Jordanian public shareholding companies were behind the rise in turnover and share prices at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) last week, the general manager of a brokerage firm told the Jordan Times Thursday.

"There was no reliable information on the level of progress achieved with regard to the law on foreign equity and whether it was approved by the Cabinet," the general manager said, pointing out that the shares of the Arab Bank and the Jordan Islamic Bank were mostly traded at higher prices on the back of conflicting news that swept the market in this regard.

Trading at the AFM amounted to JD6.12 million, seven per cent higher than the total of JD5.7 million recorded in the preceding week. The banking sector, which ranked in second place, accounted for JD2.53

million or 41.3 per cent of the total volume with the traded shares of both the Arab Bank and the Jordan Islamic Bank amounting to about JD1.40 million.

Industrial shares topped the list with a trade volume of JD2.85 million representing 46.6 per cent of the total. In third place the services sector recorded JD0.72 million (11.8 per cent) and was followed by the insurance sector with a total of JD0.16 million (2.6 per cent).

The total number of shares traded last week was 2.7 million shares that were executed through 3,022 contracts. The average daily turnover over the five days of trading amounted to JD1.2 million compared to JD1.1 million in the preceding week.

The general price index rose by 1.14 points from 165.73 points to reach 166.87 points last week. Sectionally, the price index for the banking sector increased by 3.85 points (1.79 per cent), for the services sector by 0.54 points and for the insurance sector by 0.06 points. The

industrial index, however, was lower by one point.

Comparing the prices of 88 companies whose shares were traded last week with the prices of the preceding week, the results improved for 36 firms, were lower for 29 companies while remaining stable for the remaining 23 companies.

The general manager of the brokerage firm predicted the volume of trading and the prices of shares to continue rising gradually until the end of this year.

He cited as factors for the perceived improvement better mid-year financial results being revealed by public shareholding companies and the almost inevitable decline in interest rates over the coming few months.

He saw higher trade potential and better ties with Iraq as another factor in addition to strong and high foreign exchange reserves at the Central Bank of Jordan and the passage of the law on foreign equity percentages in Jordanian companies.

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Dealers cite many factors for recession in the real estate market

** ACCORDING TO many real estate dealers and officials, high interest rates and low purchasing power are behind a state of recession in the real estate market.

Samir Abu Dosh, owner of a real estate office, said the general situation in the real estate market is very bad and attributed that to the high interest rate which discourages traders from investment. He added that the low purchasing power and the routine that persists at government departments dealing with real estate do hinder transactions and cause resentment among foreign investors.

Mustafa Adwan, another dealer, said the real estate market was suffering from some recession since the beginning of the year but has recovered some activity since the start of the summer and the return of expatriates. He indicated that the government shows keenness to develop this sector and that the concerned departments facilitate the procedures of selling and buying real estate.

Another trader attributed the recession to the unorganised real estate business, the large number of apartments on offer and the unfair competition which has led to the real estate sector being overcrowded with intermediaries. He noted that there are monopolisers, especially in western Amman, who sell a plot of land for big money and invest a portion of that amount in

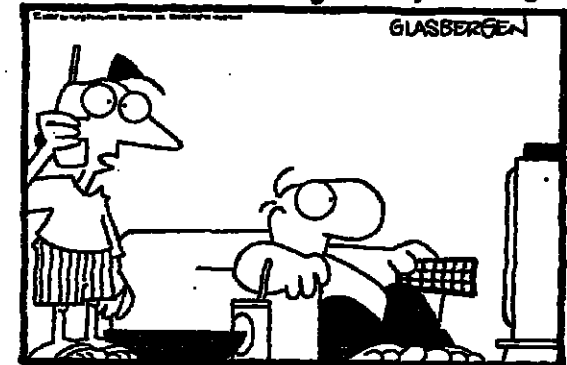
housing units at prices that suit those investors. This has resulted in more than 50,000 vacant apartments that can be found in western Amman alone," he emphasised.

The trader added that middle-income groups cannot afford to buy an apartment because of the high price which averages about JD30,000. "This amount is above the level that most people can afford and, as such, there is a recession in the real estate market," he said.

Engineer Rabee Salameh confirmed what the traders said but also pointed out that the wait-and-see attitude with regard to the peace process has negatively affected the real estate activity. Furthermore, he indicated, the high prices of land, the laws and regulations governing construction and limiting a building to a maximum of four floors in addition to the materials used in construction were other factors that influenced the real estate market and curbed the people's interest to buy.

According to the financial director at the Municipality of Greater Amman, construction fees collected during the first half of this year amounted to JD1.52 million, 38 per cent less than the projected amount. Fees collected during the first half of 1996 totalled JD1.98 million (Al Arab Al Yawm).

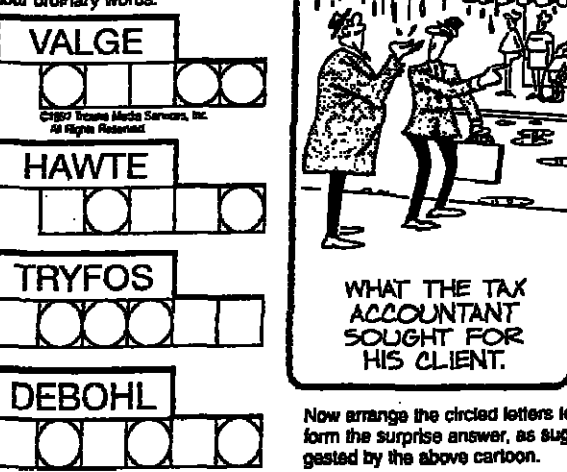
THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"I was going to order this machine that exercises every major muscle, but Stanley doesn't have any major muscles."

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



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Yesterday's Jumbles: ABATE MOUSE ZODIAC SADIST
Answer: When she was stood up for lunch it left her with - A BAD TASTE

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WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

Reality set to take over from hype in Athens

ATHENS (R) — After months of hype, accusation and counter-accusation, Donovan Bailey finally gets down to the serious business of defending his world 100 metres crown this weekend.

The Canadian Olympic and world champion added nothing to the much publicised but somewhat tawdry 150 metres showdown with Michael Johnson in Toronto on June 1 by his immediate post-race comments.

After Johnson pulled up with a pulled left quadriceps, which eventually kept him out of the U.S. trials, Bailey claimed: "He's just a coward, he's a chicken, he's afraid to lose."

Bailey apologised the following day, saying the pair were friends "but the build-up to the race had left the friendship strained."

The Johnson camp remained unimpressed and Bailey, who has always felt he has lacked respect from the Americans, came out of a race billed as a competition to find the world's fastest man with the reputation of a sore winner.

Bailey, who has been training late at night in the Olympic stadium here, claims he is ready to run faster than ever despite a virus and a slight hamstring injury.

"I've not been in my best form so far this season, but that will all change in Athens," he said.

"I love championship racing and advancing through the rounds helps me run faster and faster. If I run my perfect race, no one can stop me."

At stake is not only the world title, accompanied this year by \$60,000 prize money, but also an extra bonus of \$100,000 for breaking the world record.

The current mark of 9.84 seconds was set a year ago when Bailey added the Olympic title to the world title he won in Gothenburg in 1995.

Two of his main rivals, Trinidad's Ato Boldon and U.S. champion Maurice Greene, agree with Bailey that the record could fall this weekend, possibly breaking the 9.80 mark.

Greene, who ran a lifetime best of 9.90 seconds at the U.S. trials at Indianapolis in June, which he later equalled in Lausanne, believes he is capable of the gold.

"I am in great form and ready for a world record. I'm sure it will happen with the fastest people in the world running against each other," he said. "We are taking the sprint to a whole new level, it's going to take a world record to win."

Boldon and Namibia's Olympic silver medalist Frankie Fredericks both have their sights set on a 100 and 200 metres double.

"I ran both events in Stuttgart, Stockholm and Lausanne and I pride

myself on doing both in a short space of time. I certainly like my chances of attempting the double," Boldon said.

Fredericks, who won the 200 world title at Stuttgart four years ago, added: "My goal is to win the 100 and 200 double. The money isn't the main motivation for me, it's to prove I am the best in the world."

The first round of the men's 100 starts at 10.30 a.m. (0730 GMT) Saturday, with the second round scheduled for 6.50 p.m. (1550 GMT). The semifinals and final are on Sunday.

The battle for the women's title also starts on Saturday with American Marion Jones, second fastest woman in the world this year, favourite for the gold.

"It will be a sub-11 second time," she said.

With Olympic 100 champion Gail Devers, the world's fastest woman this year, running the sprint relay only and 1995 champion Gwen Torrence pulling out of the championships on Thursday, Jones's main rival will be the veteran Jamaican Merlene Ottey.

The first two golds to be awarded on Saturday will be the men's 20 kms walk and the men's shot put. Competition begins at eight a.m. (0500 GMT) with the qualifying rounds of the men's hammer.

Torrence pulls out

ATHENS (R) — World 100 metres champion Gwen Torrence has pulled out of the world Championships starting on Saturday without offering an explanation, a U.S. Team official said on Thursday.

Torrence, 32, was handed a wild card by the International Amateur Athletic Federation to defend the title she won two years ago in Gothenburg after knee and leg injuries kept her out of the U.S. trials.

But Ashland Whitfield, U.S. Track and Field's national team's co-ordinator, said on Thursday: "I got a phone call from one of her agents last night to say that Gwen had withdrawn from the championships. She did not give a specific reason and I did not ask."

Earlier this month Torrence pulled out of the Nice Grand Prix on the eve of the meeting, again without giving an explanation, and returned to the United States.

Mutola aims to set record straight

ATHENS (AFP) — There are few more resilient characters on the athletics circuit than Maria Mutola and here in August she will try to reclaim her 800 metres title she lost in dramatic fashion in 1995.

The 24-year-old Mutola, who made her first appearance in the Olympic Games aged 15, lost the chance of defending her title in 1995 when she was disqualified, after finishing first in her semi-final, for running outside of her lane too early.

The three-time world indoor champion was distraught but rebounded later in the season to break the 1,000 metres world record, with the bonus of the overall grand prix prize.

And aside from her disqualification she put together an unbeaten run of 50 800 metres races (1992-96) ended when she could only take bronze behind the astonishing Russian Svetlana Masterkova in Atlanta.

Masterkova added further insult to the injury by breaking Mutola's 1,000 metres record in Brussels later in August running 2min 28.98 — Mutola's record stood at 2:29.34.

Mutola, who started her career as a footballer in Maputo before she moved to Oregon on an Olympic scholarship, showed perhaps the greatest courage of her career when she came to Paris in March for the world indoors.

She blitzed the field to win her third title and then broke down in tears on the track as she revealed that her father had been killed in a car accident weeks before and she had not bothered to train.

"I didn't want to come. I was so upset as my father was my idol and role model," she said.

"I went back to Mozambique but I couldn't eat or do anything and said to my family what is it worth (a gold medal) in comparison to my father's life. However, they said go and win it for your father," Mutola added.

It is questionable whether Mutola can repel Masterkova, who appeared to be on a different sphere last season, but she has run the fourth fastest time this year — 1min 57.57 in Eugene — still almost two seconds short of Cuba's reigning world champion Ana Fidelia Quirot's world best time this year (1:55.78).

However with doubts surrounding Quirot's participation and Masterkova having said she will only run the 1,500 metres Mutola could once again prove that she is the "comeback kid" of women's athletics.

Boldon faces moment of truth

ATHENS (AFP) — Trinidad's dual Olympic bronze medalist Ato Boldon has to claim gold in either the 100 or 200 metres here at the World Championships if he is to convert his potential into actual achievement.

There is no denying the ability of the 23-year-old Boldon, who alerted his senior rivals with double gold at the 1992 world junior Games.

But he showed his immaturity in the 100 metres Olympic final last year when he blamed Linford Christie's antics, when the Briton was disqualified, for ruining his concentration — though they later made up.

The fast talking Boldon, who moved to New York at the age of 14 with his mother, could not be blamed for being run into third place in the Olympic 200 metres final as Michael Johnson blitzed the field and the world record.

And he showed his lighter more attractive side by bowing to the American after the finish.

However, Boldon, who is coached by former 440 yards world record holder John Smith, then failed to light up March's World Indoor Championships as the warm favourite collapsed with a hamstring injury in the finishing straight while American sprinter Kevin Little, who in 1989 became the first white man to represent America over the sprint distance in 13 years, took gold.

Little, who will reoppose Boldon over 200 metres in Athens, paid tribute to his opponent after the indoor final and underlined that despite the



Trinidad's Ato Boldon gestures as he replies to journalists questions during a press conference prior to the 6th World Athletics Championships August 1. Boldon, 23, won bronze in both the 100 metres and 200 metres at the Atlanta Olympics and is competing in both events at the sixth world championships in Athens (Reuters photo)

brash exterior of the Trinidadian he is popular among his fellow athletes.

"If Ato Boldon hadn't been in this event then it would have lacked real recognition and been dismissed as a below par championship. It is to his credit that he was about the only male sprint superstar who turned up. I am only sorry that he finished it by being carried off the track," the 28-year-old little said.

Boldon, who would become the first Trinidadian to claim gold at a major championships since Hasely Crawford won the 100 metres in the 1976 Montreal Olympics, showed he was fully recovered when he won the 100 metres in 9.89 seconds at the Modesto relays in May, making him only the sixth man to run the distance in under 9.90 seconds.

Boldon, who is a sociology student at UCLA, has been running back into form after a mid-season

dip he said was because of the rainy conditions — something he should not face in Athens.

He recorded double wins in both Stockholm and Stuttgart within a week of each other in July and counted the win over 200 metres in Germany as the most important.

"It was important because Frank Fredericks was in the field and I wanted to put on a show and beat him," Boldon said.

It is fair to say that Boldon, who's popularity rose above that of his compatriot and the West Indies leading batsman Brian Lara after his Olympic performances, will need to be at his confident best to win the 100 against Donovan Bailey.

However, with Johnson opting for the 400 metres he will really have only himself to blame if he doesn't bring 200 gold back to Trinidad and justify his undoubted talent.

LEADING ATHLETICS CHAMPIONS

PARIS (AFP) — Top ten athletics performers in 1997:

Men

100 metres: World record 9.84 Donovan Bailey (Can) Atlanta 27 July 1996
Leading world performances in 1997:
9.89 Ato Boldon (Trn)
9.90 Maurice Greene (USA)
9.91 Frank Fredericks (Nam)

200m: WR 19.32 Michael Johnson (USA) Atlanta 1 Aug 1996
19.77 Ato Boldon (Trn)
19.86 Maurice Green (USA)
19.90 Frank Fredericks (Nam)

400 metres: WR 45.20 Butch Reynolds (USA) Zurich 17 Aug 1988
43.75 Michael Johnson (USA)
44.08 Butch Reynolds (USA)
44.46 Iwan Thomas (Gbr)

800 metres: WR 1:41.73 Sebastian Coe (Gbr) Florence 10 June 1981
1:41.73 Wilson Kipketer (Den)
1:43.20 Mark Everett
1:43.39 Patrick Kouchalah (Ken)

1,500 metres: WR 3min 27.37sec Noureddine Morceli (Alg) Nice 12/7/95
1:41.73 Wilson Kipketer (Den)
3:30.13 Laban Kotich (Ken)
3:30.44 John Kibowen (Ken)

5,000 metres: WR 12:44.39 Noureddine Morceli (Alg) Nice 12/7/95
12:48.98 Daniel Komen (Ken)
12:52.39 Salah Hissou (Mor)
12:54.60 Haile Gebrselassie (Eth)

10,000 metres: WR 26:31.52 Haile Gebrselassie (Eth) Oslo 4 July 1997
26:31.32 Haile Gebrselassie (Eth)
27:17.09 Mohamed Moubt (Bel)
27:21.53 Dieter Baumann (Ger)

3,000m steeplechase: WR 7:59.18 Moses Kiptanui (Ken) Zurich 16/8/95
8:01.80 Moses Kiptanui (Ken)
8:02.77 Wilson Bolt Kipet (Ken)
8:03.51 Bernard Bantasi (Ken)

Marathon: WR 2hr 6min 55sec Hailaynek Dinsamo (Eth) Rotterdam 27 April 1985
2:07:51 Domingos Castro (Por)
2:07:54 Alejandro Gomez (Esp)
2:07:55 Antonio Pinto (Esp)

110 metres hurdles: WR 1:29.71 Colin Jackson (Gbr) Stuttgart 20 Aug 95
1997 best:
1:29.71 Allen Johnson (USA)
1:31.11 Anier Garcia (Cub)
1:31.13 Igor Kivanc (Svk)

400 metres hurdles: WR 46.78 Kevin Young (USA) Barcelona 6 Aug 1992
47.77 Bryan Robson (USA)
47.97 Llewellyn Herbert (Rsa)
48.00 Derrick Adkins (USA)

High Jump: WR 2.45m Javier Sotomayor (Cub) Salamanca 27 July 1993
2.36 Tim Forsyth (Aus)
2.35 Konstantin Manusevich (Rus)
2.34 Javier Sotomayor (Cub)

Pole vault: WR 6.14 Sergey Bubka (Ukr) Seefeld 31 July 1994
6.00 Maksim Tarasov (Rus)
5.96 Tim Lobinger (Ger)
5.91 Risan Botha (Rsa)

Long jump: WR 8.95m Mike Powell (USA) Tokyo 30 Aug 1991
8.63 Ivan Pedroso (Cub)
8.49 James Beckford (Jam)
8.49 Eric Waldner (USA)

Triple jump: WR 18.29 Jonathan Edwards (Gbr) Gothenburg 7 Aug 1995
17.74 Jonathan Edwards (Gbr)
17.64 Yoelbi Quesada (Cub)
17.51 Kenny Harrison (USA)

Shot put: WR 23.12 Randy Barnes (USA) Los Angeles 20 May 1990
22.03 Randy Barnes (USA)
21.78 Kevin Toth (USA)
21.68 John Godina (USA)

Discus: WR 74.08 Jurgen Schult (Gdr) Neubrandenburg 6 June 1986
71.50 Lars Riedel (Ger)
67.40 John Godina (USA)
66.66 Michael Mollenbeck (Ger)

Hammer: WR 86.74 Yuriy Sedykh (Ussr) Stuttgart 30 Aug 1986
83.04 Heinz Weis (Ger)
82.90 Balazs Kiss (Hun)
82.66 Andrey Abduvaliyev (Ussr)

Javelin: WR 98.48 Jan Zeleny (Cze) Jena 25 May 1996
94.02 Jan Zeleny (Cze)
90.44 Boris Henry (Ger)
89.22 Kostas Ganioudis (Gre)

Decathlon: WR 8,891 pts Dan O'Brien (USA) Tallahassee 7 Sept 1992
8,617 Edward Haimalainen (Fin)
8,604 Steve Fritz (USA)
8,582 Tomas Dvorak (Cze)

Women

100 metres: WR 10.49 Florence Griffith-Joyner (USA) Indianapolis 16 July 1988
10.89 Gail Devers (USA)
10.90 Marion Jones (USA)
10.96 Merlene Ottey (Jam)

200 metres: WR 21.34 Florence Griffith-Joyner (USA) Seoul 29 Sept 1988
22.16 Marion Jones (USA)
22.17 Zhanna Phinisevich (Ukr) (Alfina)

400 metres: WR 47.60 Marita Koch (Gdr) Leningrad 4 Oct 1985
49.39 Cathy Freeman (Aus)
49.40 Heather Mills Clark (USA)
49.79 Chantay Opara (Ngr) (Alfina)

800 metres: WR 1:53.88 Jarmila Kratochvilova (Cze) Munich 26 July 1983
1:57.78 Ana Fidelia Quirot (Cub)
1:57.14 Kelly Holmes (Gbr)
1:57.35 Yekaterina Yefremova (Rus)

1,500 metres: WR 3:50.45 Qin Yanyan (Chn) Beijing 13 Sept 1993
3:50.45 Qin Yanyan (Chn)
3:50.45 Qin Yanyan (Chn)
3:50.45 Qin Yanyan (Chn)

5,000 metres: WR 14:36.45 Fernanda Ribeiro (Por) Berlin 22 July 1995
14:40.43 Gabriela Szabo (Rom)
14:46.35 Lyda Churruarín (Rsa)
14:52.25 Fernanda Ribeiro (Por)

10,000 metres: WR 29:21.78 Wang Junxia (Chn) Beijing 8 Sept 1993
31:14.51 Julia Vassner (Svk)
31:28.12 Nya Camm (USA)
31:30.59 Annika Peters (USA)

Marathon: WR 2:28:00 Ingrid Stenberg (Svk) Stockholm 27 Sept 1985
2:28:00 Ingrid Stenberg (Svk)
2:28:00 Ingrid Stenberg (Svk)
2:28:00 Ingrid Stenberg (Svk)

110 metres hurdles: WR 1:29.71 Colin Jackson (Gbr) Stuttgart 20 Aug 95
1997 best:
1:29.71 Allen Johnson (USA)
1:31.11 Anier Garcia (Cub)
1:31.13 Igor Kivanc (Svk)

400 metres hurdles: WR 46.78 Kevin Young (USA) Barcelona 6 Aug 1992
47.77 Bryan Robson (USA)
47.97 Llewellyn Herbert (Rsa)
48.00 Derrick Adkins (USA)

High Jump: WR 2.45m Javier Sotomayor (Cub) Salamanca 27 July 1993
2.36 Tim Forsyth (Aus)
2.35 Konstantin Manusevich (Rus)
2.34 Javier Sotomayor (Cub)

Pole vault: WR 6.14 Sergey Bubka (Ukr) Seefeld 31 July 1994
6.00 Maksim Tarasov (Rus)
5.96 Tim Lobinger (Ger)
5.91 Risan Botha (Rsa)

Long jump: WR 8.95m Mike Powell (USA) Tokyo 30 Aug 1991
8.63 Ivan Pedroso (Cub)
8.49 James Beckford (Jam)
8.49 Eric Waldner (USA)

Triple jump: WR 15.50m Inessa Kravets (Ukr) Gothenburg 10 August 1995
15.14 Rodica Mateescu (Rom)
15.09 Inna Lasovskaya (Rus)
14.94 Ashia Hansen (Gbr)

Shot Put: WR 22.63m Natalya Lisovskaya (Ussr) Moscow 7 June 1987
21.22 Astrid Kumbernuss (Ger)
20.73 Victoria Pavlyash (Ukr)
19.29 Stephanie Storp (Ger)

Discus: WR 76.80m Gabriele Reinsch (Gdr) Neubrandenburg 9 July 1985
68.52 Beatrice Rammstein (Ndr)
67.72 Natalya Sadova (Rus)
67.66 Franka Dietrich (Ger)

Hammer: WR 80.00m Petra Felke (Gdr) Potsdam 8 Sept 1988
69.66 Ute Homstad (Nor)
68.24 Anna Bisset (Cub)
67.32 Mikaela Ingberg (Fin)

Javelin: WR 7.291 Points Jackie Joyner-Kersey (USA) Seoul 24 Sept 1988
6.787 Jackie Joyner-Kersey (USA)
6.787 Jackie Joyner-Kersey (USA)
6.787 Jackie Joyner-Kersey (USA)

Decathlon: WR 8,891 pts Dan O'Brien (USA) Tallahassee 7 Sept 1992
8,617 Edward Haimalainen (Fin)
8,604 Steve Fritz (USA)
8,582 Tomas Dvorak (Cze)



Michael Johnson, 200 and 400 meters world champion from the United States (L) shares a laugh with U.S. 100 meters champion Maurice Greene. Athletes from 200 countries are taking part in the event (Reuters photo)

TODAY AT

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PHILADELPHIA *1*

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PHILADELPHIA *2*

Whoopi Goldberg ... in
EDDIE

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:699238

PLAZA

John Travolta...in
PHENOMENON

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:671500

CONCORD

CONCORD *1*
Kevin Costner...in
TIN CUP (3:30, 8:30)
Demi Moore...in
THE SCARLET LETTER (12:30, 6:15, 10:30)

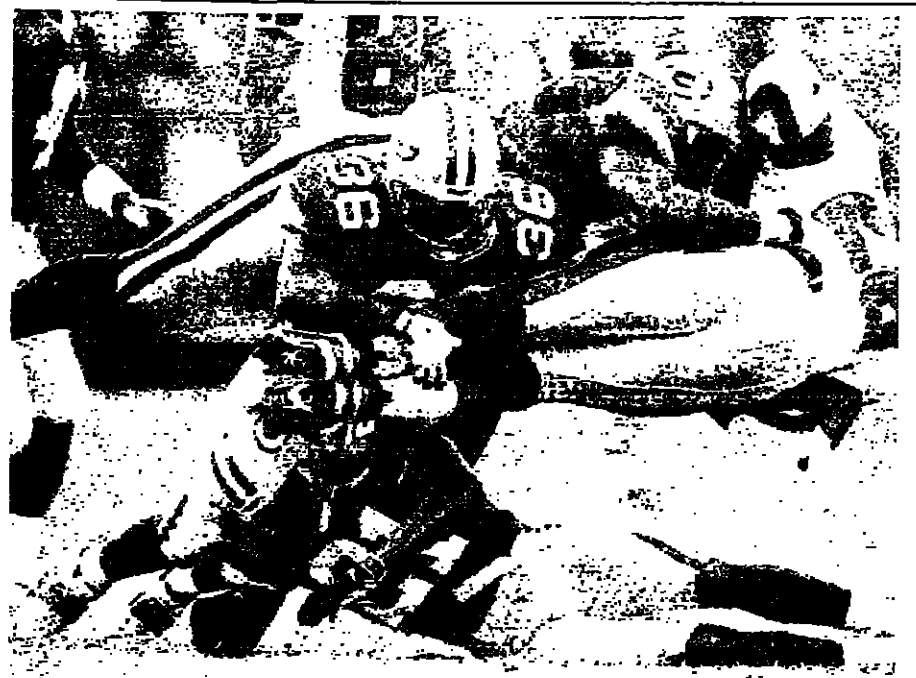
CONCORD *2*
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Green Bay Packers defensive players LeRoy Butler (36), Craig Newsome (21) and Brian Williams tackle New England Patriots running back Curtis Martin (28), after a seven yard rushing gain in the first quarter of their NFL pre-season game at Lambeau Field in Green Bay, Wisconsin. The two teams last played in Super Bowl XXXI (Reuters photo)

Dolan defies doctors orders and wins at U.S. nationals

NASHVILLE (R) — Olympic gold medalist Tom Dolan defied doctors orders by competing in the 200-metre individual medley at the U.S. swimming nationals Thursday and won the event, earning a place on the world championships team.

Dolan, an asthmatic, has had breathing problems since he arrived for the competition. He complained about stifling heat and harsh pool chemicals at the indoor facility and paid a price for his victory.

"I'm burning a little bit," Dolan said. After winning in two minutes and 1.18 seconds, Dolan suffered an asthma attack and complained of dizziness and leg cramps. He needed a brown paper bag to aid his breathing after the race.

"It's tough when mentally you are there and physically you aren't." The victory was Dolan's second national title of the meet and seventh in his career. He won the 400-meter individual medley earlier in the week, qualifying for both events at the World Championships in January.

In another final Thursday night, Olympic champion Brooke Bennett, the successor to retired U.S. distance queen Janet Evans, posted the world's fastest 800-metre freestyle this year to win the event.

The 17-year-old Bennett, who took 800 gold in Atlanta, won the event in 8:28.79, finishing nearly three body lengths ahead of runner-up Diana Munz. Flowing in Evans's footsteps, Bennett also won the 1,500-meter freestyle earlier in the week.

Bill Pilczuk, 25, extended his career by winning the 50-metre freestyle in 22.45 seconds. Pilczuk said if he had not won in the top three he was going to retire.

"I was ready to hang it up but this will keep me in it another three years," said Pilczuk, who took no breath during his 41-stroke race.

"So what if I turn blue and I'm killing 1,000 to 2,000 brain cells every 50 I swim. It's worth it."

Double Olympic silver medalist Gary Hall, with no Russians to push him, finished a disappointing fifth in the 50.

Amanda Adkins won the women's 200-meter backstroke in 2:12.62.

The meet is serving as U.S. team trials for the FINA World Championships in Perth, Australia, the Pan Pacific Championships in Fukuoka, Japan, and the World University Games in Sicily.

Jordan, Iran automatically qualify to Asian Basketball Championship

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan and Iran have automatically qualified to the 17th Asian Basketball Championship next month after their two other opponents in the qualifiers Iraq and Syria pulled out.

Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Iran were to contest the Aug. 9-14 West Asia pre-qualifiers in Tehran, Iran with the top two teams advancing to the Asian Championship in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia Sept. 11-19.

Sixteen teams will be playing in Riyadh. The top five from the last championship and the hosts qualify automatically and there will be two teams from each of the Asian Basketball Confederation's (ABC) five regional zones.

While the ABC had accepted Jordan's bid to host the four-team pre-qualifiers, the Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) had conceded the bid to Iran last month saying it would "be financially more rewarding."

The JBF explained it was unlikely to cover the expenses of accommodating the teams would run up to JD 15,000. Iran on the other hand, was to cover the teams' travel expenses as well.

ABC Vice-Chairman Awwad Haddad said that up to seven teams might contest qualifiers in the future as the West Asia zone also includes Palestine, Yemen and Lebanon but the three have not paid their dues to the ABC and will therefore not compete.

Jordan's men's team which finished 6th in the recently-concluded Pan-Arab Games will now prepare for the Riyadh Championship with minor changes on the lineup which will be coached by veteran player Imad Al Saeed who has left Austria where he resided to return to Jordan. He will be assisted by Amer Taleb following the dismissal of the Ukrainian coach.

With top players like Hilal Barakat, who was below form in the First Division championship, Naser Bushnaq, Marwan Ma'touq and Yousef Zaghloul, the line-up is mostly made up of younger players and includes Zeid Alkhas, Ma'an Odeh, Yousef Abu Bakr, Naser Alawneh, Faisal Nsour, Ayman Du'nis, Naser Bassam and Fadi Saqqa.

Ramez Hamimoudeh, Ghaith Ennabi, Nihad Madi and Ala' Bilbeisi will join the line-up after Mahmoud Sha'bun, Marwan Saedi, Naser Bassam and Jan Sahlieh left for personal reasons.

Al Jeel promoted to basketball's 1st Division

By a Jordan Times
Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Al Jeel beat Al Ashrafieh 68-40 at the weekend to win the 2nd Division Championship and clinch the sole qualifying berth to the First Division as of the 1998 season.

Al Jeel finished the competition with an unbeaten record throughout the preliminary and final rounds. They were runners-up in the Second

Division last year.

Al Wihdat and Al Raya were the other two teams in the final round after they got top two places in their respective groups, which included six teams each.

The 12 competing teams represented both Second and Third Division clubs playing in two groups. Group A included Al Jeel, Abu Nussair, Homsatmen, Al Wihdat and Shihab. Group B included Gazzet Hashem, Al Raya, Qamim, Ebbin, Sama and

Al Ashrafieh.

The First Division now includes Jazireh, Ahli, Orthodoxi, Jalil who will be joined by Hussein and this year's newly promoted team, Al Watani and Yarmouk were relegated to the Second Division this year.

The Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) rules stipulate that Second Division teams be required to register under-16 teams as a prerequisite for participation as of the coming season.

Coetzer moves into semifinals at Carlsbad

CARLSBAD, California (R) — Amanda Coetzer, the compact South African with the potent forehand, posted a straight-sets victory over erratic Indonesian Yayuk Basuki at the Toshiba Tennis Classic Thursday to reach her ninth semifinal of the year.

The third-seeded Coetzer combined patience with power to beat Basuki 6-3 6-4 in a 77-minute quarter-final clash.

"I played the right shot at the right time. I didn't try to go for two much unless I came to the net and was forced to hit a good shot," the seventh-ranked Coetzer said.

Basuki, who was coming off Wednesday's upset of fifth seed Anke Huber, actually hit 16 more winners than Coetzer. But her 33 unforced errors — compared to just 11 for the South African — nullified all her good work.

"She can be a very dangerous but I was the steadier player today," said Coetzer, who awaits the winner of the late quarter-final between second seed Monica Seles and Natasha Zvereva of Belarus.

Seventh seed Conchita Martinez romped into the quarter-finals with a 46-minute, 6-1 6-0 pasting of Czech veteran Helena

Sukova.

"It was a great match for me. I was very aggressive and didn't let her play her game," said the 1994 Wimbledon champion.

Martinez will "not" have long to savour her lopsided victory. The win put the Spaniard directly in the path of World No. 1 Martina Hingis just four days after the Swiss teen crushed Martinez in a final at Palo Alto.

Coetzer used pivotal breaks in the seventh and ninth games to capture the opening set from Basuki.

With the South African up 5-4 in the second, Basuki self-destructed, producing

her seventh double fault at match point to put Coetzer into an increasingly familiar position — the final four.

Coetzer credited the obvious improvement in her play to her work with Australian coach Gavin Hopper, who helped turn her steady game into a dangerous one — one that accounted for two victories over Steffi Graf earlier this year.

"I really had to change my ground strokes. I had to get a weapon into my game," explained the 5-foot-2 (1.57 m) blonde.



Michael Chang

Ivanisevic, Muster bounced from Canadian Open

MONTREAL (R) — The Canadian Open lost its second and third seeds on Thursday when Goran Ivanisevic and Thomas Muster were upset in the third round.

Ivanisevic, who survived a three-set thriller Wednesday, was unable to repeat his second-round heroics and was bounced by 57th-ranked American Chris Woodruff 7-6 (8-6) 6-2.

Muster, who claims to be more comfortable on hard courts than clay these days, was nevertheless ushered out 6-2 2-6 6-4 by 50th-ranked Frenchman Fabrice Santoro.

American Alex O'Brien tried to rob the tournament of its top seed but Michael Chang recovered to post a 4-6 6-2 6-3 victory over the 15th seed that earned him a quarter-final meeting with eighth-seeded Dutchman Richard Krajicek.

"Playing Richard is never easy, particularly if his serve is on," Chang said. "The crucial part for me will be to break it."

Also moving into the quarters was fourth-seeded Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov, who downed 13th-seeded defending champion Wayne Ferreira of South Africa 7-5 6-3.

Kafelnikov next meets fifth seed Thomas Enqvist, a 6-3 6-2 winner over fellow Swede Jonas Bjorkman, the 12th seed.

Sixth-seeded French Open champion Gustavo Kuerten of Brazil and seventh-seeded Australian

Mark Philippoussis also advanced.

Woodruff, who next meets Philippoussis, found a big difference between the Ivanisevic who beat him in the third round of the Australian Open and the man he faced here.

"In Australia he hit something like 33 aces against me," said the 24-year-old from Knoxville, Tennessee, who faced just six aces Thursday. "I got a lot of second serves today."

The third-ranked Ivanisevic said he was out of shape after the three-week break he took near his home in split following his second-round loss at Wimbledon.

"I was lying on the beach and doing nothing, a nice life," he said. "For one set today I was running then in the second set I was breathing a little bit heavier than usual. I lost my concentration and didn't serve as well."

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